

WIRE

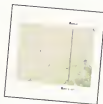
THE WIRE ADVENTURES IN MODERN MUSIC
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Boris Josephine Foster The Complainer Annie Gosfield

Steve Beresford Kali Z Fasteau
Foetus Alex Von Schlippenbach
Electrelane





AARKTICA
Bleeding Light
CD
(Daria)



GUTEVOLK
Tivvle
CD
(Happy)



MAQUILADORA
A House All On Fire
CD
(Daria)



ARBOL
Dreams Made of Paper
CD
(Lejos Discos)



KANDA
All The Good
Meetings Are Taken
CD
(Bop Tart)



JENNIFER O'CONNOR
The Color and the Light
CD
(Red Panda)



AUBURN LULL
Regions Less Parallel
Early Works & Rarities
1996-2004
CD
(Daria)



KOBOL
Broken Ebony
CD
(Static Discos)



PIANO MAGIC
Disaffected
CD
(Daria)



FAX
Removes & Collaborations
CD
(Static Discos)



MAHOGANY
Memory Column
Early Works & Rarities
1996-2004
2xCD
(Daria)



RUSSIAN FUTURISTS
Our Thickness
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(Upper Class)



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The Masthead

Last month's Masthead reported on John Zorn taking on the Wagnerian conservatives of Bayreuth, as documented on his *Tzadik* CD, *Rituals*. In this month's return bout, Zorn takes on the rest of the world with *Naked City's The Complete Studio Recordings* (also *Tzadik*). "I have radically remastered this music with exciting and loving attention to every last detail," he writes. "Mistakes have been corrected, balances adjusted and thanks to the latest in digital technology the music is louder, clearer, more in your face and exploding with more energy than ever before. Even if you already own one of the original discs, I strongly urge you to pick this set up and experience *Naked City* as it always sounded."

The sheer audacity of Zorn's pitch might smack of Wagnerian megalomania, if he wasn't spot on. Originally released between 1989-93, this music has never sounded so good. Featuring himself on sax, Fred Frith on bass, Bill Frisell on guitar, Wayne Horvitz on keyboards and Boredoms' Yamataka Eye on vocals, *Naked City* was set up to test the small group format to its very limits. Further, because it parodied Zorn's growing fascination for hardcore, he commanded the group to carry out his explorations at lightning speeds that would have crippled lesser musicians. But this music is more than just quick 'n' thrash. In terms

of *Naked City*, Zorn pretty much got over the thrill of speed as an end in itself on *Torture Garden*, comprised from the hardcore sections of their 1989 debut, *Naked City*, and 1992's *Grand Guignol*. What distinguishes *Naked City* from all the punk, sludgy Metal and Grindcore groups the fan in Zorn namechecks in *Naked City's* extensive thanks lists is their extraordinary capacity for pinballing between so many styles, from punk through Country twang through Hawaiian cocktail music through rattle and roll and more, say, in the 50 second span of a track like "Speedfreaks" on *Grand Guignol*. It's not all cartoon frenzy, however, and indeed the music is most compelling when it's most spacious, on their debut album and 1993's *Radio*, respectively, or the extraordinary studies in Baudouin decadent atmospheres of *Asimwe* (1993).

What is still problematic about *Naked City* is the artwork with which Zorn binds the project together. This set partially resolves such difficulties by hiding the discs' original shock imagery inside a handsomely constructed box. Possibly out of a desire to preserve the project's integrity, the gross-out drawings of Japanese manga artist Maruo Suohiro are included in inserts and accompanying hardback booklet. So too the severed head picture, surgical photographs and antique erotica. *Naked City's* usage of such imagery is

partially explained by Zorn's notes for *Grand Guignol*, in which he declares that that Parsian theatre's "celebration of the darker side of our existence has always been with us. It always will be."

Sure, but reproducing the picture of a Chinaman undergoing death by 100 cuts on the sleeve of *Long Zhi's* (the 30 minute piece is now on *Albumele*) is hard to justify, and personally I'm nowhere near sophisticated enough to swallow philosopher George Bataille's thesis, in his *Rears And Eros* text, about the opium fed to the victim fixing his expression somewhere between pain and ecstasy. Yet *Long Zhi's* is an utterly harrowing exploration of extreme duress, and when Yamataka Eye enters two thirds through, the music is positively bloodcurdling. As it should be.

No real link from there to the announcement of our design team Non-Format's departure from the magazine. During their four year tenure, Neil Ekholm and Jon Fosse's designs have won the recognition of numerous international design journals, including *Creative Review*. We wish them all the best in the future. In their place, say hello to James Goggin, who founded his Practise studio in 1999 after graduating from London's Royal College of Art. You can read his contribution to the *Inner Sleeve* on page 79. Welcome onboard. **CHRIS BOHN**

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Subscriber special

For details of how to subscribe to *The Wire*, turn to page 98 of this month's issue or go to www.thewire.co.uk



With this month's issue, all *The Wire*'s subscribers will receive a free and exclusive copy of *Marke B 05*, a new compilation celebrating Berlin's thriving electronic music culture

Marke B is a two-day festival showcase for Berlin's network of electronic music labels, artists and producers. To tie in with this year's event, which takes place at the Maria Am Ufer space on 27 and 28 May, organisers Gudrun Gut, Thomas Fehlmann and Daniel Meteo have compiled an 18 track CD featuring musicians who will be appearing at the event, including Barbara Morgenstern & Robert Lippok, ISAN, Duran Duran Duran, Frank Bretschneider and Senking, and that have been taken from the catalogues of participating Berlin labels, including ~Scape, Morr Music, Kitty Yo, Monika Enterprises and Shitkatapult. This special CD is given away to all *The Wire*'s subscribers with copies of this month's issue. For more information on the Marke B festival go to www.markeB.de

Marke B 05 is the latest instalment in an ongoing series of CDs that are specially produced for *The Wire* and given away to all the magazine's subscribers worldwide with selected issues of the zine. These CDs are only available to subscribers, and are not on sale with the magazine in the shops. If you are not yet a subscriber you can still get your hands on a copy of the CD by taking out a new subscription to *The Wire* this month. Just turn to page 98 or go to www.thewire.co.uk

Letters

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CD-R networking

I wholeheartedly agree with Ian Middleton's letter (*The Wire* 254) about the upcoming Swill Radio Shadow Ring and Ideal Fire Company LPs, plus his recommendation of the fantastic Tart Ring In The Adrenal LP. However, surely he is somewhat short-sighted in his belief that CD-R reviews should be banned.

The notion that the accepted stature of the CD-R release opens up a huge chasm of incredibly poor and lazy music is with little significance. There is just as much utter crap (probably more so) released on manufactured CD and vinyl than there is on CD-R. If anything CD-Rs have upped the quality stakes as more and more isolated outsiders have a cheap and quick means to commit their thoughts to disc and let forth on the public sounds and compositions which would have otherwise lay undiscovered.

It's surely no coincidence that sub-sects of the outsider music paradigm such as New Weird America have blossomed as the CD-R format comes more to the fore. Check out such CD-R luminaries as MV & EE Medicine Show and their astonishingly good *Child of Microtones* label; the countless bevy of bebutes on The Jewelled Antler Collective label; Sunburned Hand Of The Man's Marbled CD-R imprint; and Jackie-O Motherfuckers CD-R happy U-Sound imprint. Then there's the utter gem of Finnish folk folk covered by such Scandinavian CD-R friends as Lai Lai Lai and 267 Lattigaa; and transcendental drone from Holotogus and the Heavy Blossom CD-R label, Double Leopards and their limited CD-R imprints on Heavy Tapes. There's also England's own Ashbury Navigations with CD-Rs released on the *Memoirs Of An Aesthete* label.

If anything *The Wire* should consider dedicating a reviews section specifically to the CD-R format, because it not only crosses many genres it can also promote a certain ideal of independence and individuality.

Mark Falconer-Hamilton via email

Humour by-pass

Whatever happened to the English sense of humour? That's the question raised by reading Dan Warburton's comment on Cathy Berberian's *Beatles Anus* record (*The Wire* 252).

Too bad that everyone on earth has not fallen for this delicious neo baroque mixture, made from the meticulous mix of seriousness and humour, of elegance and provocation that also characterises the prestigious ambassadors of this English nonsense we so rightly love, such as Monty Python and The Portsmouth Sinfonia.

A musicological study comparing Mr Louis Andriessen's arrangements might have brought a certainly more serious and interesting critical counterpoint. On the other hand, pretending Cathy Berberian is making a fool of everyone – from The Beatles themselves to audiences at her recitals, plus the "poor sods" who bought her record – and therefore questioning the sincerity of her approach, is a critical misjudgment.

Cathy Berberian developed a passion for Beatles music, as her daughter Cristina Berio says in the booklet: "My Beatlemania caught on to my mom – she created *Beatles Anus* as an amusing tribute to them, as well as her own clever way of bridging the gap between two musical worlds traditionally far apart, the pop and the classical." Writing in *Vibrations* 69, Gilles Jordan says, "The re-release of *Beatles Anus* allows us to measure the breathtaking gap between Cathy Berberian's generous eccentricity and contemporary cynicism, which will only see another occasion to grin at this attempt."

Seeing this same cynicism gaining a foothold in *The Wire* is quite disturbing. Its appearance makes the reissue of Berberian's *Beatles Anus* all the more urgent and necessary.

Maro Canteles, Paris, France

Death letter blues

Buying music in considerable quantities over the 36 years since Woodstock teaches you to respect other people's taste and to avoid calling something rubbish just because you don't like it. My taste now centres around drone, doom and dirge, and my collection has been greatly enhanced by purchases based upon articles and reviews in *The Wire* – specifically *Sunn O))), Merzbow, Boris, Nurse With Wound, Hams Newman* and even *Peter Cusack*. I could go on but I want to demonstrate that I am no stranger to having to work in order to like an album.

So to the point of my letter: I bought Uncle Woody Sullender's album, *Nothing Is Certain But Death*, based on Clive Bell's review (*The Wire* 253), and it's garbage! The bottom line is that most people buy *The Wire* and other music magazines for the album reviews. After a while you start to read between the lines and pick up reviewers' preferences. Unless you can hear an album before buying it, you are going to make a few mistakes but the trick is to keep these to a minimum.

However, I challenge anyone to like UWS. I am comfortable with albums that don't contain conventional tunes and lyrics, but there is no vicious drone, no repetitive note and no musical skill in evidence. So what am I missing? Please help.

Richard Girling via email

Corrections

Issue 254 In Ira Cohen's *Invisible Jukebox* his *Stratstreams Poetry Series* was inadvertently referred to as *Sipstreams Poetry Series*. Issue 253 In Ken Vandermark's *Invisible Jukebox* archivist Eric Ziarko's name was misspelled. □

The Joined-up World Of *The Wire*

The Wire 256: on sale from 19 May

All copies of next month's June issue will come with a free 20 track CD, *The Wire Tapper 13*, the latest volume in our ongoing series of new music compilations (for details of previous volumes in the series, turn to page 99).

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Adventures In Modern Music on Resonance 104.4 FM

A weekly show of new music hosted by *The Wire* staff, broadcasting across central London on 104.4 FM every Thursday 8:30-11pm GMT, repeated every Wednesday 7:30-10pm GMT, with simultaneous streaming at www.resonancefm.com. Shows are then archived as downloadable MP3s every Monday at www.thewire.co.uk/web/rar/mp3.

Bitstream

News and more from under the radar.

Compiled by The Trawler

The Year-end all-democracy starts to fade: Mark Stewart

Pop Group founder **Mark Stewart** breaks cover with a live performance at this year's Venn Festival in his hometown of Bristol. The vocalist, who has been working with Asian Dub Foundation, The Bug and Primal Scream, has put together a new group drawn from the ranks of the On-U Sound massive: Doug Wimbush, Skip McDonald and Keith LeBlanc, with Adrian Sherwood on the live mix. The festival is in early June; for full details see this month's Incoming section in Out There >> **Bill Laswell**, the influential bassist and producer touring the UK this month (see Out There), has just announced a new deal signed with the rapidly expanding label group Sanctuary. Laswell plans to bring six separate projects to the table on his newly formed imprint Nagual. These will include his own reworkings of dub classics from the Trojan Records archives (Trojan Dub Massive Chapters One and Two); new LPs by his groups Praxis (featuring contributions from Iggy Pop, Serj Tankian from System Of A Down and Kiliah Priest) and Tabla Beat Science, plus a new drum 'n' bass unit called Damaged >> Talking of Sanctuary, that's also the title of a forthcoming solo album by **Alexander Hacke** of Einstürzende Neubauten. Released on 17 May on Koolhaas, the album's foundations are recordings of musicians Hacke has encountered on his travels around the world over many years, including Foetus, New York turntablist Larry 7, Jesus Lizard's David Yow, steel cellist Robert Rutman, Berlin guitarist Caspar Brötzmann, and others. These "some keepsakes" have been processed, resampled and woven into new material. The CD includes an enhanced section with

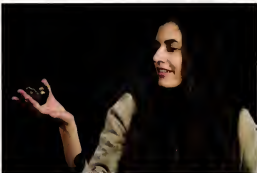
video material, and a 18-page photo booklet. Meanwhile **Neubauten**, who have just finished a lengthy tour celebrating 25 destructive years, have also had a book published, packed with interviews and photos from their long strange trip. *No Beauty Without Danger* by Max Das & Robert DeLeon is only available, along with much more Internet-only merchandise including a welder's apron, from the neubauten.org Website >> The poetry and prose of celestial jazz pioneer **Sun Ra** have been turned into a book. Compiled by Ra experts James L. Wolf and Hartmut Gorken, *Sun Ra: The Immeasurable Equation* contains 530 pages including essays by various contributors and many photos, and is available in a private edition. For info and ordering, contact wolfwhite@t-online.org >> Just when you thought guitarist **Derek Bailey** couldn't throw down any more surprises, he's come out with *The Gospel Record*, a collaboration with Amy Denio and Dennis Palmer on Shaking Ray Records. Seven Southern gospel tunes are reinvented with Bailey's fiery improvisations and, apparently, homemade Heavy Metal and funk samples. Ain't that the truth >> Turner Prize winning artist Jeremy Deller has co-curated an exhibition at the Curve Gallery in London's Barbican called **Folk Archive**, opening this month. Under the banner "Contemporary Popular Art from the UK", this show celebrates a wide range of current folk art, demonstrating how traditional forms such as needlework, homemade sculptures and totems, painting, drawing and rituals have survived and mutated in the 21st century. As well as the permanent display of photographs, artefacts and films,

the exhibition has a musical component curated by The Wire's Rob Young. Over two Sunday afternoons in July you can hear *Adem's Assembly*5, A Hawk & A Hacksaw, Leafcutter John and DJ Bob Stanley (10 July); and Robin Williamson (from *Incredible String Band*), Hamilton Yams and DJ Gruff Rhys (17). The events take place on the Barbican Free Stage, Level D, 1-4pm, free. Folk Archive runs until 24 July. www.barbican.org.uk/gallery >> *Blue Tear* is a new installation piece by **Russell Mills**, Mike Fearon and Ian Watton, showing in the cylindrical exhibition tower of the Silo Espago Cultural in Dporto, Portugal. The Lake District based artist, who has previously made cover art for David Sylvian, David Toop and others, has created a multi-level environment of corroding corrugated iron panels, lights projected through mounds of salt, slow-motion films projected on a wall of 700 X-ray images, and a soundtrack comprising amplified sounds of evolving natural processes, ice cracking, earth movements, etc. The piece is showing until 24 May. Info: www.shedmatter.co.uk/russellmills/installations/blueleirs.htm >> A new sound art museum has opened up in Rome. Imaginatively named the **Sound Art Museum**, the space in via Conte Verde opened its doors earlier this spring with a group show, *Inaudita*, featuring installations from Aconci Studio, Donatella Landi, Stephen Vibello and Achim Wolscheld, and selections from its archive of 350 audio artworks. The curators encourage contact and contributions from sound artists worldwide. See the Website for details and the mailing address: www.soundartmuseum.net □

Josephine Foster

Attic blues.

By David Keenan



"I just can't stand to have a straight, flat American tone," explains Chicago singer-songwriter and vaudeville spirit Josephine Foster. "It actually seems very antithetical to my intentions and ideas of beauty to use dull consonants and vowels and bypass all the lovely overtones and shapes that really attracted me to singing in the first place." Foster's vocal style draws on a clutch of contradictory modes. It combines a facility for expressive extremes comparable to Patty Waters with the precise comportment of folk singers like Karen Dalton and Shirley Collins, and the kind of fast vibrato most associated with the flapper style of early Tin Pan Alley. "It is quite etched in me," she confesses, "and a sort of mannered style is actually my most comfortable and honest way of expression. I mean, I dig the blues but I guess I feel more that I can express my American bluesiness via Tin Pan Alley or the styles of singers like [early 20th century Broadway star] Blanche Ring." Foster's recorded work — three albums to date plus a bunch of tougher-to-locate CD-Rs — draws much of its unusual power from a dialectic that reconciles a feel informed by the experimental underground (from where she drew the core of her early audiences) with a more mainstream tradition as transmitted by artists as disparate as Josephine Baker and Kate & Anna McGarrigle. As such, her music exists in the same kind of liminal space as anachronistic countercultural figures like Tiny Tim, The Incredible String Band and R. Crumb's Cheap Suit Serenaders.

"I think I straddle both worlds," she admits. "I manage to incorporate my own love of underground or oddball music into much of what I do. Though I must admit that I'm not too familiar with a lot of what folks consider truly underground, for instance free folk, though I've met these artists via festival organisers who have invited me to play with these kind of groups.

However, I would say that ultimately I am more of a structuralist and devout song maker. Everything I do descends from structure, even if it's only a very thin noodle of a song. I have always loved just a good strong lyric that can be sung again and again and has a very crafted rhyme and a sort of mini-divine code etched into it, like a lesson song."

Although Foster is a classically trained singer — she moved from Colorado to Chicago in order to study opera at college and her early epiphanies included Debussy, Henry Purcell and Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* — it wasn't until she dropped out of school and hooked up with the Chicago underground scene that she began to formulate her own identity. After a stint as one half of indie/folk group The Children's Hour, she formed Bom Heifer, a duo with bassist Jason Ajemian whose first, self-titled album was released by Locust in 2004. From a jazz background, Ajemian works a stark, expressive pulse deep into the music's most subliminal architecture in a manner that recalls Danny Thompson in UK folk group Pentangle. Foster plays harp and mandolin and sings songs possessed of a frugal Appalachian beauty while revealing layers of resonant detail with every spin.

Inspired by her encounter with Ajemian, she began casting around for collaborators interested in forming an electric rock group to match her increasingly bent songwriting style with the quicksilver energy and folk roots of psychedelic jam groups like Jefferson Airplane and Fairport Convention. "Grace Slick's voice and The Band were very big influences on me," she states. "I always wanted to sing in this epic, lovely, heavy folk rock style and experience the deep grooves of this sort of 'rock ancien'."

Foster dubbed her backing group The Supposed and they released their debut album, *All The Leaves Are Gone*, on Locust last year. Its mixture of Brian

Goodman's slashing Tom Verlaine/Robbie Robertson-style guitar, some loose, fluid arrangements and wildly spirited vocal performances add up to an explosive collection of death blues. Foster's songwriting is at its most incisive and bleak, combining folk tropes and evocative up-endings of myth with a black streak of pessimism. An album highlight, "Deathkiss!", opens with the lines, "You think you are safe, you are wrong/Not even awake in a storm/Look how there's no trace you were born/Time gave us good chase now we're gone!"

"I guess I feel that at least for me keeping thoughts of death at hand heighten life greatly and take away the fog of stupid ambitions and objectives when they begin to compromise my mind," Foster explains. "It is an ideal of sorts but I fall very short of its realisation. I am trying to create a repertoire of songs that assist me in remembering all earthly delights and sorrows because I am easily lulled and numbed by this human world we have and it is a pit of fire to me really. Music is just one of the few remaining elevators."

On her new album, *Hazel Eyes, I Will Lead You*, Foster has alchemised her sorrow into something a little more redemptive, with a series of luminous, wide-open songs bolstered by sparse settings of harp, bells, ukulele, flute, kazoo and sitar, and populated by recurrent images of supernaturally animated wildlife alive in the shade of tall, sheltering trees. "I feel I was marked at an early age," Foster concludes, "three months, in fact, as my birth father crashed his small plane and perished. It was my mother's second wedding and I was quite obsessed with his death growing up and made up all manners of explanation for this. I was very preoccupied with his mystery and determined at one point that he could be discovered residing in apple trees. I was so sure." □ Hazel Eyes, *I Will Lead You* is out now on Locust

VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR



Van Der Graaf Generator

35 years after the release of their first UK album, the band also take the stage for their first full gig since 1976 in the classic four-piece line up of Peter Hammill, Guy Evans, David Jackson and Hugh Banton.

1. Every Bloody Emperor
2. Boleos Ponio
3. Nutter Alert
4. Abandon Ship!
5. In Bobelsberg
6. On the Beach

1. Vulcan Meld
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Boris

Wrecking ball rockers.

By Edwin Pouncey



Boris (from left to right): Takeshi, Wata, Atsuo and friend

"Our music is in a constant state of destruction, resurrection and continuation," attests Takeshi, bassist in Japanese power trio Boris. The group's ingenious blending together of hard rock, stoner sludge and experimental rock acts as a firmly grounded musical foundation, on which they build skyscrapers of Ambient sound that are then demolished with a brutal wrecking ball of a heavy rock riff. By submerging themselves in Boris's past (with the emphasis on garage psychedelia and Progressive styles) and embracing its future by becoming involved with such modern music magicians as Keiji Haino, Merzbow and drone lords Sunn O))), Boris's work can also be appreciated by audiences who may be wary of being pushed headlong into subterranean Metal's singing arena.

Made up of Wata on guitar (whose beautiful 'corpse' graces the front cover of the recently released *Boris At Last - Feedback*), Takeshi on bass (who can be seen hunched in perfect Nick Drake posture over a double-necked guitar on the cover of another new offering called *Akuma No Uta* CD) and drummer Atsuo (whose activities outside the group include collecting frogs and studying various fungi), Boris have been in action since the early 90s, abandoning other group projects that they prefer not to mention. The origin of their name comes from a song title on veteran sloth rockers The Melvins' *Bulldozer* album.

"I found myself becoming possessed by that song when I first heard it," claims Takeshi. "It just kept going around in my head. I was particularly impressed by the heavy down-tuning technique that The Melvins used on the recording, so much so that I decided to call our band Boris in recognition of the way that song had affected us."

Another group Takeshi insists were important to the development of Boris was Dylan Carlson's Earth, whose heavy droning guitar bombardment can be heard vibrating through their extended workouts *Absolutego* (1996) on Southern Lord and the double vinyl version of *Oronivel*, which has just been released by Misanthropic Agency. "Earth changed my life," reveals Takeshi reverently. When I first heard Earth it

felt as though I was standing in front of a stampeding herd of elephants - that's what their music sounds like to me."

That crushing power which Takeshi describes is particularly prominent on the single, 65 minute track that makes up *Absolutego*. Here Boris combine The Melvins' guitar rush with Earth's subterranean bass rumble to produce an astonishing work that salutes those groups while pushing the form to its absolute limits. Another impressively involving creation was the more experimental and even longer *Flood* (2001), where Boris's resonating feedback exertions ebbed and flowed through an ocean of minimalist Ambient hum. Although they admit to being seduced by the music of such 60s rock titans as Blue Cheer, Pink Floyd and The Pretty Things - whose influence can be heard vibrating through records like *Amplifier Worship* (1998) and *Heavy Rocks* (2002) - *Flood*'s rushing improvisational tide of instrumental colour, texture and movement confirms that the sound of Boris is not confined to simply rocking out.

After what seemed like years of waiting for something to happen outside of their home city of Tokyo, Boris finally embarked on a European tour schedule during March of this year where (as well as supporting Sunn O))) on their recent invasion of Europe) they played alongside such groups as Six Organs of Admittance, Capricorns and Mats Gustafsson's garage punk jazz trio The Thing.

"We all attended art school in Japan," says Takeshi. "I studied film and video there, so I feel that there is a visual aspect to the sounds we are producing. In a couple of months, Inoxia Records will be releasing a soundtrack we have recorded for an imaginary film called *Mabuta No Uta*, which roughly translated means from the back of the eyelid. By listening to this record we hope that you will be able to see as well as hear the music we are playing. Everybody will see different things on *Mabuta No Uta*, but the music will be going in the same direction."

This visual aspect of the group is a device they ingeniously use to set them apart from their

contemporaries and inform their fans about their musical roots. For the cover of *Amplifier Worship*, the image of a frog was used to counterbalance the extreme violence of the music.

"Too many Japanese rock bands release their albums in black sleeves," groans Takeshi, "so we decided to put a cute looking frog on the cover of *Amplifier Worship* to get away from that. To twist it."

As a design group, Boris work under the name Fange Anal Satan (partly cribbed from another Melvins song) and produce their own album sleeves, label and T-shirt designs, often referring to iconic existing record covers. As mentioned earlier, the just released *Akuma No Uta* CD sports a skilfully modelled replication of the late British folk singer Nick Drake's brooding cover shot for his *Bryter Later* album, while the limited picture disc version of the record twists UK Black Metal stalwarts Venom's *Welcome To Hell* Satanic pentagram logo into a shape that screams Boris.

"We wanted to show that we have a connection with Nick Drake, Venom and also Roger Dean, who has done artwork for bands like Budgie and Yes," explains Takeshi. "By using that style of artwork on our records we are showing people where our personal rock history is coming from, and how we also want to be an ongoing part of that history."

("Except it's HIS rock history," teases Wata and Atsuo.) The other reference to Boris's fascination with rock's history is guitar player Wata's amplifier of choice. While such drone doomsters as Earth and Sunn O))) have famously sworn allegiance to Sunn amplification, Wata prefers to pulp his sound through an Orange amp, a designer classic which was once the preference of rock outfits during the late 60s and early 70s.

"I prefer an Orange amp because it sounds good, it looks cute and it's heavy," she laughs. "I play my guitar through it and after the *big* those two end up carrying it." □ Boris At Last - Feedback is out now on Conspiracy. *Akuma No Uta* is out now on Southern Lord

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Annie Gosfield

Music out of the moon.

By Julian Cowley



"I've always been captivated by sounds that aren't considered music," says New York composer Annie Gosfield. "Any barrier between music and noise has always seemed artificial to me. Many of my compositions explore the inherent beauty of non-musical sounds and are inspired by such diverse sources as machines, destroyed pianos, warped 78 records and detuned radios. Incorporating these in my music is as natural as choosing a pitch set or creating a rhythmic figure."

The title track of her latest CD *Lost Signals And Drifting Satellites* (Tzadik) is a duet for violin and recorded satellite transmissions. "At first I was simply drawn to the beauty and mystery of the satellite sounds," Gosfield explains. "Then I learned that listening to Sputnik (the first satellite, launched by the Soviet Union in 1957) and watching it pass overhead was a nightly event for people all over the world. I was struck by the image of individuals watching the skies and listening with rapt attention to the most abstract, faraway, beautiful signals. I imagined each person's intimate relationship with this basketball-sized spinning hunk of metal and considered how differently each might have interpreted the mysterious blips and beeps from space. I'm hoping violinists who play it will interpret the signals in their own way, identifying different timbres and concealed melodies embedded in the satellite sounds."

Growing up in Philadelphia, Gosfield studied with classically trained jazz pianist Bernard Peiffer, who told her, "If you're going to play the wrong notes, play them in the right way." His advice encouraged her to perform with conviction and not shy away from those wrong notes. After further formal training in piano and composition she experienced the 1980s punk explosion in Los Angeles. Playing in various groups and free improvising ensembles, she absorbed the

prevailing mood. "There was a strong spirit of defiance that taught me to write exactly what I want and not fear rejection," she says. "Performing was often trial by fire. It prepared me for less than perfect situations later in my career and taught me how to deal with having things thrown at you by strangers."

Gosfield's music has found a congenial home with John Zorn's Tzadik label. Moving to New York in the early 1990s, she entered a flourishing experimental scene. "It was a great time to develop skills as composer, improviser and bandleader and to work on all the grey areas in between," she says. Zorn invited her to participate in his Radical Jewish Culture festivals at the Knitting Factory. "This put me on the road to balancing a life of performing with my group and writing notated works for ensembles and soloists," says Gosfield. "I love the laboratory aspect of working with musicians in both scenarios. My experience as an improviser has had a profound effect on my choices as a composer, forcing me to consider all musical possibilities, allowing me to have a much freer mindset when composing. Improvisational techniques crept into my notated work and more ambitious structures crept into my less notated pieces for my own band." *Flying Sparks And Heavy Machinery* (Tzadik 2001) is a riveting display of her dual compositional existence. *EWAZ*, realised by a quintet led by Gosfield on sampler, incorporates composed pieces, extensive improvising and loosely structured sections. The title track, coupling string and percussion quartets, is entirely notated. "These pieces use two very different languages to express common musical ideas," she observes. Both were inspired by a visit in 1999 to factories in Nuremberg, Germany, where she participated in a project combining art and industry. "I recorded sounds to use in *EWAZ*, a concert-length site-specific piece presented in a factory at the end of my residency,"

she recalls. "It incorporates sampled machine sounds, percussion played on factory metals, altered electric guitar, machine-inspired rhythms, ambient noise and recycled sounds of many factories."

Creative engagement with non-musical elements is just part of the picture. Gosfield's compositional skill and ingenuity are far broader and more impressive in scope than this aspect alone suggests. "I've had the opportunity to write for some great musicians and their personal history can influence a piece as well," she points out. *The Harmony Of The Body Machine*, on the latest CD, bears the stamp of those Nuremberg factories in sound samples that accompany the cello. But it was written for Joan Jeanrenaud, who has amazing technique, immense personal style and a couple of decades of experience developing extended techniques with some of the 20th century's best composers. Gosfield is currently writing a concerto for virtuoso cellist Felix Fan, but, she stresses, "although it's very important for me to write for individual performers, my ultimate goal is to create music that best reflects my own artistic vision."

Gosfield, who will be Darius Milhaud Visiting Professor of Composition at Mills College, Oakland, California in autumn 2005, describes a piece called *The Manufacture Of Tangled Ivory* as "a tangle of four layers of detuned piano, prepared piano and the lone snap of a sustain pedal". It appears on *Burnt Ivory And Loose Wires* (Tzadik 1998), mostly a collection of pieces for ruined, sampled and altered piano sounds. "I've spent as much time with pianists Fats Waller, Thelonious Monk, Jelly Roll Morton and Professor Longhair as I have with Cage and Beethoven," she remarks, concluding, "Fats Domino is important to me too... I saw him in Austin when I was 15 and when he pushed the piano across the stage with his belly, I almost died." *Lost Signals And Drifting Satellites* is out now on Tzadik. www.anniegosfield.com

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MINIATURE

The Complainer

The art of grumbling.

By Eric Smillie



Wojtek Kucharczyk aka The Complainer

"I am known as a real complainer," groans Polish artist Wojtek (sic) Kucharczyk, remarking on his new project, *The Complainer*, whose debut album sponsored by retro*sex*galaxy is released this month on his label Mik.musik.l. "I complain even if I should be happy. I always try to keep a distance from myself, so I also try to make jokes about myself. I am somehow complaining about myself. I am at the age of 36, so this is another reason to complain."

With *The Complainer*, Kucharczyk grumbles about his present situation, sometimes with the aid of musical ballast dredged from memory. On "Photonew," he sings the Depeche Mode line "I'm taking a ride with my best friend" (from "Never Let Me Down Again") over a beat recalling a keyboard preset that falters halfway through, as if exhausted by its endless repetition. When it kicks back in, *The Complainer* keeps repeating, "This is not a cover."

"I always liked covers, new interpretations," Kucharczyk explains. "So finally I found a way to make them appropriate for me. A this-is-not-a-cover is something between a remix, bastard pop, plunderphonics and a regular cover. For example, I take some samples from one group, part of the text from another song of the same group but from a different time period, sing it myself, remix it and add what is lacking for my taste. The source of 'I'm taking a ride with my best friend' could at once be discovered, but it is also just a sentence. Anyone can say this for a billion reasons. This-is-not-a-cover is playing with this library of prejudices and musical memorabilia, and partially a discussion of copyrights, common rights, etc., too. It is possible to say that it is like building musical proverbs."

Kucharczyk launched Mik.musik.l. around 1996 as an outlet for his group Molt Drammaz, formed with sister Asia Bronisławska and friends, because nobody else would release them. The label has since released just under 40 albums (including ten by Kucharczyk under various monikers), and recently switched from CDR to

professional production. It is home to other Polish fringe artists like Ściek, who blends folk and electronic noises. Deuce, who sings over noisy breakbeats, and avant hip-hopper Co. Originally conceived as a tribe from a distant, imaginary country, Molt Drammaz fused live instrumentation, unorthodox vocals and electronics in a theatrical, pseudo-ethnic rock. Kucharczyk's first solo project, retro*sex*galaxy, was inspired by basic elements like blood and water. "I wanted r'n'g to remain very intellectual," he argues, "something that you can have real fun with when you manage to decode it. But I also wanted to have it be almost satirical, full of humour. I can't understand things that are only serious. They are boring for me. There must always be at least one window open."

"I was always interested in making ordinary or very odd things in ways natural for me but alien for 'regular' artists or musicians," he continues. "I always knew that it could be a painful way, but I had the feeling that this had to be my way. There is no other option for me."

As a teenager in Katowice, Poland, he was drawn to the electronic sound of early 80s electronic pop pioneers Soft Cell, Ultravox, Depeche Mode and Human League, but it was a while before he could obtain his own keyboard. "The electronic gear they used was something exotic in Poland," he recalls. "It was completely another era, maybe even the widest in Polish history in the 20th century, when communism was about to break, martial law was in place, etcetera. All these synthesizers were a fancy symbol of a really advanced way of living unavailable to us and they were somehow connected to science fiction. I was a fan but I couldn't get them, so I took drums. I played to Depeche Mode on a snare drum and the armchair or desktop at home."

The ethic of making do has stuck. When composing, he sucks new life from old gear like the Yamaha keyboard he's had since he was 17. He finally replaced his ten year old 90MHz Mac a few months ago, but he

still uses a homemade drum machine from the same era. "Not a lot is necessary," he declares. "Working in a minimalist way you must think more and cannot flow as easily as with fancy hi-tech [equipment]. This is an effect of the 'painful way' I described, but this is also the advantage."

Kucharczyk finds inspiration in the odd juxtapositions and discordances of plunderphonics. "I was very into plunderphonics as a style some years ago, when I found that such a style existed," he enthuses. "I quickly started experimenting with it but I found again that I had to make it my way. I don't care if somebody made something similar before me. My reasons are different for sure. It is more difficult to dig into yourself for prejudices than into 'culture'. So I have dug into various materials, but my two releases somehow directly connected with plunderphonics plunder my own history much more than outside contexts."

On Molt Drammaz's TUI (2001), for example, Kucharczyk roots around in his family history for field recordings from home and a story told by his 83 year old aunt. Similarly, on the retro*sex*galaxy release booklet pansen (2002), he chopped up French chansons that had been very popular in Poland during his childhood. On one track, singers croon one belle's name after another in a silly illustration of the source material's overabundant emoting. Then, two minutes in, he cuts to a nervous-sounding, lone accordion refrain, repeated eerily above a mass of sputtering noise.

Though he challenged himself to plunder from as many sources as possible for *The Complainer*'s sponsored by retro*sex*galaxy, some songs are purely sample-free. The gritty beat and menacing rattle of the synth tones on "Trash" are Kucharczyk's work, as is his distorted plea, "Please recycle/ Please recycle me." Whether he's challenging the copyright laws or complaining about the state of his living room is left unclear. □ Sponsored by retro*sex*galaxy is out this month on Mik.musik.l. www.mikmusik.org

Global Ear: Houston

A survey of sounds from around the planet

John Fenn scratches under the gleaming surface of big business in the state capital of Texas to blow the whistle on the city's musical miscreants



Clockwise from top left: Joe McPhee at school of Improv, Dave Dove with students, guitarist Kevin Patton

Conservative" describes Houston well. Politically, socially, economically and musically, the Texan city exudes a reactionary corporate sheen that interlocks with its massive scale (it's the fourth largest city in the United States), which serves to smoothly pave over the experimental ruptures rolling under its shiny surface. Houston makes you think of Enron, Halliburton, oil and big hat country, but not necessarily noise, glitch, improv or progressivism of any sort. But an emerging ethos of "creative music" — an inclusive label used by many artists here to delineate approaches rather than genres — is threatening to change perceptions of the city. "Emerging" is an appropriate term because the scene is still coalescing, with rogue musician-artists hacking their way along individual paths that are dangerously close to converging.

My Houston tour guide is Kevin Patton, a media artist, composer and guitarist, who combines jazz chops with a glitch mentality. One of his musical projects, The Kevin Patton Trio, veers from fairly straight improvised jazz roots into noisier experimental terrain. "Gesture is the focus of the pieces, rather than improvisation along melodic lines," he explains. "The texture of the group comes from a musical gesture inspiring another, and so on — a call and response of sorts, but without relying on melody." A listen to the trio's recent release, *A Pocketful Of Stones* (La Junkie Lovegun), gives an idea of what he's talking about. Guitar based free playing morphs into feedback avalanches, or vice versa, and labels like jazz, noise or rock become meaningless. Defying categories is central to the Houston creative music scene and Patton's eclectic endeavour epitomises this attitude. Over the past few years he and his wife/artistic partner, Carmen Montoya, have worked together as Aphasia Project, a multimedia duo focused on video and sound performance installations. Montoya uses found footage, her own visceral video, and fractured fantastical narratives in order to rock audiences back and forth between mystical realism, surrealism and socio-political realities. She often provides the source of the sounds as well, with her storytelling or sonic performance (drinking water in one piece) merging with Patton's circuit bending, Max/MSP patches, tape pieces or guitar improvisations. The results move well beyond mere accompaniment, with

audio and video components of Aphasia Project forming intertwined frameworks for interpretation. Mutually dependent on each other for meaning, the sounds and visuals of Aphasia Project pieces form a semiotic synergy that comes alive in performance.

With Donna Huanca as audio/video curator, The Station Museum in Houston is a perfect venue for such work. In fact, Aphasia Project performed there in December as part of the Con-Silence performance installation. Looking to depose distinctions between artforms anchored largely in privileging one perceptual mode over another, Huanca has thrown her energy into programming events focused on sensory cross-fertilisation. As an artist, she juxtaposes her background in painting and textiles with an intuitive (ie non-academic) approach to electronic music, putting together performance based pieces that she describes as "sense painting". A recent piece involved amplified sewing machine, as she created fabric art onstage. In her curatorial role, Huanca concretises this approach by refusing the distinction between museum galleries and performance spaces. Not content to merely have music in the museum, she wants sonic artists and musicians to be central features in the experience and interpretation of art otherwise linked to visual perception.

Along these lines, the Station Museum announced a new sound series called INTONARUMORI. Designed to interrupt "the static nature of art objects and museum spaces with the ephemeral nature of performance", the series invites sound artists and musicians to set up temporary installations as responses to visual pieces hanging in the Station's galleries. Pushing for dialogue across artistic and perceptual categories, Huanca is prepared for anything — including outrage and indignation. So far in her tenure as curator, more than one visual artist has confronted Huanca over the audio affronts on their work — photographer John Lucas expressed extreme annoyance over the "abusive" sounds near his art, and video artist Amaka Hanthas protested peering sounds that did not complement her own. "So be it," is essentially Huanca's response, as her goal is reinvigoration of a stagnant art world rather than rearticulation of accepted (and expected) categories.

Trombonist Dave Dove holds similar convictions about pushing aside established ideas concerning music and art. An improvising musician for the past 12 years, Dove has helped run the Deep Listening Institute Houston since its inception in 2001 (as The Pauline Oliveros Foundation Houston — the name change is recent). Energised by a supportive board of directors and a vibrant volunteer staff, Dove and DLIH have worked to establish a community for contemporary music in Houston by promoting performances and coordinating exploratory efforts in arts education. Hosting seven or eight concerts a year by internationally acclaimed avant garde artists, DLIH aims to increase the audience for local improv, noise, electronic and glitch acts. In addition to playing shows, well known contemporary music artists such as Joe McPhee, Susan Alcorn, William Parker and Pauline Oliveros participate in workshops on improvised and creative music making.

Other in public schools or via an ongoing improvisation class, Dove has led, under the auspices of public arts organisation MECA (Multicultural Education and Counseling through the Arts), youth in Houston get exposed to non-traditional music experiences. He acknowledges that you never know what will come of these sessions and they certainly can fall apart. However, the reward for him has been watching numerous young musicians come up through the MECA class over the past few years to become active in the Houston scene. "These are people I play with now," he says, underscoring his belief that the scene — though still subterranean — is crystallising. The decision he made some years back to stick it out in Houston despite the lack of coherent context for unconventional music is finally paying off, and he retains a good feeling for the future. "The magic of Houston is that brilliant people are doing their own things in the shadows," he notes. And now it seems those shadows are receding. < Websites: www.lajunkielovegun.com (Kevin Patton); www.stationmuseum.com (Station Museum); www.pofnic.org/houston (Deep Listening Institute Houston); www.meca-houston.org (MECA). Thanks to Dr Barbara Rose Lang (University of Houston) and Sound Exchange Records

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Tested by Phil England. Photos by Sue Parkhill



Born in Wellington, Shropshire in 1950, Steve Beresford started playing piano at seven and later read music at York University. His formal studies were paralleled by a budding career as a Hammond organ player in a soul covers group. An early interest in listening to and performing improvised music led to him promoting a concert by the duo of Derek Bailey and Han Bennink at the University.

A year after he moved to London in 1974, Beresford called a meeting at his house which led to the formation of the London Musicians' Collective. Principally a pianist, he also plays small instruments, bass guitar, trumpet, euphonium and low grade electronics. His work is marked by a mixture of irreverence, humour, speed, virtuosity, anti-virtuosity and playfulness. As well as improvisation, it has run the stylistic gamut from dub reggae, punk, pop and commercial music for TV documentaries and feature films. He has appeared on more than 150 recordings, including his 1978 solo album *Bath Of Surprise* (on David Cunningham's Piano label, recently reissued on CD by Amoebic Records), and records by Portsmouth Sinfonia, Vic Reeves, The Slits, Trevor Wishart and The Flying Lizards.

As an improviser he has worked with George Lewis, John Butcher, Vervan Weston, Lol Coxhill, Tristan Tsonis, John Zorn, The Shakin' Ray Lewis, Roger Turner and Evan Parker. Regular performance groups have included Alterations with David Toop, Peter Cusack and Terry Day; The Melody Four with Lol Coxhill and Tony Coe; and a longrunning duo with drummer Han Bennink, which continues until this day.

He has taken on the role of fixer, arranger and producer for a number of projects including The Dedication Orchestra, Butch Morris's London Skyscraper and, most recently, the London Improvisers Orchestra, which performs conducted improvisations and other works every month in North London.

PAUL BLEY/Franz Koglmann/ PARRY PEACOCK "KID DYNAMITE"

FROM ANNETTE (FANTASY) 2001, REC 1692

I always confuse Annette Peacock and Carla Bley. I think it's a Carla Bley tune and it's probably Paul Bley playing it.

It's Paul Bley but it's not a Carla tune, it's an Annette tune.

Good choice. Until I heard Misha Mengelberg, Paul was the most important influence on my piano playing and I still think he's a complete master. I heard Cecil [Taylor] first playing with Steve Lacy. I tried to play like Cecil and realised that it was a lot more difficult than I thought, but I was only 13 or something.

Then I bought Paul Bley's 1965 Fontaine record, *Touching*, with Barry Altschul and Kent Carter.

I particularly liked Kent Carter's playing because he reminded me of [Anton] Webern. There were lots of wide interval leaps and very wide dynamic changes when you didn't expect from a jazz bass player. I think *Open 70 Love* on ECM is Bley's best solo record, but it is profoundly devoted [laughs]. He does that Annette tune "Nothing Ever Was, Anyway", which is one of the most depressing titles. Most of Annette's tunes are very slow and depressing. She told me that she only feels happy when she listens to depressing music.

For me the less notes Paul plays the better. I like Paul when he's like Webern. I immediately saw a connection between those two musics. Obviously this particular tune is still in a key but then much later I heard the stuff with Jimmy Giuffrè and Steve Swallow, which is more self-consciously moving away from tonal centres.

Paul's quite militant actually about improvised music in terms of asserting its importance. Historically he's just ridiculous because he played with Charlie Parker in 1953, played with Ornette Coleman, he was one of the first people to play Moog synthesizer. He made a record with [Sun Ra saxophonist] Marshall Allen and he produced a Sun Ra solo record. Apart from being a fantastic piano player, he was also a great innovator and made amazing connections with lots of different types of musicians.

PETER CUSACK & MAX EASTLEY "ZERO DAY TO ZERO NIGHT"

FROM *DAY FOR NIGHT* (PARADIGM) 2000

Is this a Max Eastley sound sculpture?

You're half right. It's Max Eastley, but it's a duo.

David Toop? Peter Cusack?

Peter Cusack.

I don't know what Pete's doing but it sounds very nice. It's difficult to know from the credits who is doing what on any particular track. Peter used tapes and homemade electronics in *Alterations*?

He did. Everybody brought anything they were working on into that group. David [Toop] and I brought in metrical backing tracks and Terry [Day] brought his poems in. On the third record, I barely played any piano and Terry read a lot of poems that we couldn't hear while we were playing, but it didn't seem to matter. The group seemed to be a bit of an oddball in that whole scene. It stands out, not exactly as a sore thumb, but as a unique example of an approach to improvised music.

It was definitely an aberration in terms of free improvised music. We were using instruments that still haven't really found a place in free improvisation like bass guitars. We would use bass guitar to play riffs on rather than to go, 'This is an interesting sound source,

let's expend it'. We accepted the limitations of those instruments. Obviously if you're using a toy piano or something like that, the limitations of what you can do with it are quite strict. You can shake it, play it or bow it, that's it. So using toy instruments that basically only did one thing could be expanded to take in things like bass guitars.

How did other people in the improvising community like Evan Parker feel about groups like *Alterations*? Did they have a problem with the anti-virtuosity element?

I don't think Evan has ever had a problem with people not showing off their technique. Tony Osley had a problem with it. I think I can tell the story of Tony packing his drum kit while we were performing, right next to us. He definitely had a problem with that band.

TIBETAN MONKS & MUSICIANS "RISE UP, PADMA"

FROM *TIBETAN MONKS' RHYTHM TAPES FROM THE MONASTERY OF BHUTAN (SUN ROSA)* 2000

[Within seconds] Well presumably this is Tibetan Buddhist music. The percussion is more expressionist than usual. I've never heard them play like this. Is this an Ocarina record or something?

The recordings were made by John Levy in the early 70s that have just been reissued on Sun Rosa.

You've written before about the influence of non-Western cultures on improvised music. Were you listening widely to music from other cultures?

Oh yes, definitely. I used to go round and see Evan [Parker] a lot and I think he had everything that was out. I think he picked up that habit from John Stevens originally. That's part of the tradition of improvised music, that people know about music from all over the place. Sometimes it feeds in an obvious way to the music. Sometimes it feeds in a structural way, which is much more interesting. Tibetan music took you out of the idea of even free jazz, because you not even start off with a tune. There isn't a tune, it's not to do with that. It's music that has particular religious functions. The idea that you can make music out of a long drone that you modulate slightly and then intersperse it with these cymbals and there's no particular metrical rhythm or if there is then it's very, very loose. John Stevens would definitely take ideas from listening to something like this and make a piece out of it.

I like the natural wildness of double reed instruments in particular. The shawm instruments in Tibet and the nagaswaram in India, for example. There is something really scary about those instruments because they're so loud and almost uncontrollable.

RIP, RIG & PANIC "SHADOWS' NOT THERE BECAUSE OF THE SUN"

FROM *ODD (VIRAGE)* 1991

Some vinyl next.

I recognise the crackle. The vocal sounds like [The Slits'] *An Up*. Is it Art?

Yeah.

So it must be an early Adrian Sherwood thing.

I don't think he had a hand in it. Really? What the fuck is it? The drums sound very 70s, very floppy snare. Something to do with Bristol?

Yap.

Don't know. I've never heard it.

It's Rip, Rig & Panic.

With An singing? She sounds great. I never knew about this. There was a lot of give and take between those groups, they all tended to use the same people.

How did you come to be involved with The Silts?
 Vv Albertaine [of The Silts] and Gareth Sager [of The Pop Group and later Rip, Rig & Panic] used to come to [Derek Bailey's] Company gigs. I thought Vv was very beautiful and managed to get to talk to her. Gareth was doing the noisy bits in The Silts but they were looking for someone else. I liked the idea of varying my role a bit. I played a bit of guitar. I remember my euphonium got flattened on the trip between New York and LA. And the management went out and chose a keyboard for me to play without asking me. They got me this really horrible Yamaha electric piano with a stick-on wooden veneer and one noise that was vaguely acceptable. I couldn't believe that I wanted a Fender Rhodes. We also had a Farfisa VIP-500, which I loved and still have. That was my severance pay from The Silts. But Rip, Rig & Panic lost the bid. An just made a new record and I made some overdubs with fly acoustic instruments. It's a dance music thing, which I think is really great.

You were also on a single by journalist Vivien Goldman around this time.
 There were two singles. Vivien's idea of how to make a record was to invite everybody she knew into the studio at once. And then a week later she'd invite all the people who couldn't come the first time. Annie Whitehead, Carol Thompson and Keith Levene [of PIL] were all involved. I knew Vivien Goldman quite well at that time. And that's how I met Adrian Sherwood.

JOHN ZORN

"COBRA 5: D POLYLEPIS"
 FROM COBRA LIVE AT THE KNITTING FACTORY
 ROUTING FACTORY WORKS 1993

[Listens in silence for a minute]

Any ideas?

It sounds American — but that's just from the accents. Something to do with Bob Dylating? It feels like it's more from the theatrical or poetry traditions rather than the music tradition. Is that right?

No.

So who is it?

It's an all-vocal version of Cobra from the early 1990s. The group includes Jeff Buckley and Judy Dunaway, and was put together by Eric Qin. You were involved with John's game pieces early on?

Dh yeah. I did Cobra and Xu Fung. Fantastic fun. The game structure is incredibly addictive. It must be funny from the audience point of view, because Zorn will argue with you. At the same time as playing, the musicians are giving him suggestions for the next cue by for instance touching up their nose or holding up three fingers. But if he doesn't like the idea he'll give you a hard time. It must also knock you sideways a bit. You can't have the time be self-conscious if you're thinking in two different spaces.

It does feel like two different parts of your brain working. That's quite hard so you tend to do anything you can think of. If you've suddenly been told to play, then you just play. And that hopefully brings in musical instincts as opposed to non-musical instincts. You're engaged in physical attempts to play music and also thinking about changing the direction of the music quite radically. As an improviser in a free improvisation group you can certainly change the music, but there's no way you could suddenly stop everybody at the same time. The changes are like tape edits. Although I think there is also a change, which is like a crossfade between one condition and another. That's why these pieces interest me because they do produce results that you could never do with just free improvisation.

Are these pieces are still played regularly?

I think so. Someone contacted me recently about doing a UK version of Cobra and I found some notes that I made about it at the time that I thought I'd lost.

BUTCH MORRIS/LÊ QUAN NINH/ JA DEANE

"OZONE: BURNING BLUE"
 FROM BURNING CLOUD (FMR) 1996

I immediately thought of [trumpeter] Don Ellis but it's obviously later. He had that kind of sound but he wouldn't be playing with a drummer like this. Then I thought of [trombonist] Albert Margolisdorf but it's not him.

Do you recognise the instrument?

I'm assuming it's trumpet and a trombone.

It's a comet — maybe that's a clue.

So it's Butch Morris? I haven't heard Butch play this exuberantly. I think of him as quite an introverted player. He plays on Cassandra Wilson's *Blue Note* record [1996's *New Moon Daughter*]. He plays this extraordinary solo that has such a strong atmosphere that the whole of the rest of the record feels like Butch is on it, though he's only on it for about a minute. He should play more often.

This was recorded in 1993. Since then he's mainly concentrated on his conducted improvisations.

What was your experience of the Butch Morris London SkyScraper Tour in 1997?

There was a real feeling of community. It was great being on the couch with all those people and a lot of the music was great. It also resulted in the foundation of The London Improvisers Orchestra which has now been working for six years virtually every month and made seven records. So that tour was much more than a showcase that just went away. I phoned up Dh Robinson to be in that band expecting him to say, 'I'm not playing that kind of rubbish,' but he actually said, 'Great. I wish people would ask me to do these things more often.' Dh is very much part of the free improvisation community as a consequence of that tour.

SCRITTI POLITI "OPEC — IMMAG"

FROM OPEC (ROUGH TRADE) 2005

Dh, it's bass guitar. [Listens more than laughs]. It sounds like the gay disco producer who played clubs. It's not Arthur Russell. It's a London Musicians' Collective connection.

[Halfway through the song, singer Green Gartside starts to sing more conventionally] Dh, is it early Scritti Politti? He's already trying to sound American.

Do you remember seeing them at the old LMC building in Camden?

No, they hated the LMC! I remember a time in a back room in the pub across the road from the LMC called The Engineer. [David] Toop and Fred Frith were there and Green and maybe a couple of his followers. I mean, people just followed him around like poodles. It was like, 'You're not playing music for the proletariat so you're ideologically incorrect.' This was the sort of thing that people who would later become mammoth pop divas would say when they were starting out and were still in the Young Communist League. The drummer had firm canisters instead of symbols, which was their way of saying, 'We know about these new music percussionists,' but firm canisters are really horrible sound sources. Certainly Green thought he was a cut above everybody else. There were weird

artistic decisions happening at Rough Trade at that time. I remember [trumpeter] Harry Beckett guesting on either a Ramcoats or a Red Claydon record and he sounded horrible — they'd just recorded him so badly. Everyone here has very strange ideas of what a good record should sound like at that point.

Was the LMC some sort of refuge for people who were enlivened by the DIY spirit but were not necessarily into the punk thing? Or was there a crossover?

There was definitely a crossover. There was a thing called the Jazz Punk Bonanza, which Alternations played at. There were those guys Nag and Bendle, who were very funny and had a band called Door And The Window, which Mark Perry played drums with later on. There was a group called Repetition And The Repetitions and a group, which Andrew Brenner — then known as Gilet — started called The 49 Americans. He made an EP where each track was 49 seconds long, which was recorded on a cassette recorder in his front room. Everybody's mum came and sang this song called 'Is This Rock 'N' Roll?'. It featured a lot of DIY trombone playing and a woman called Else, who played great drums. If I ever wrote songs now, Andrew is my lyricist. That's one of the best home recorded records I've heard and is still really enjoyable. All that stuff recently came out on three CDs on a Japanese label.

PRINCE FARI "PRINCE OF PEACE"

FROM CRU TYFF DUB ENCOUNTER VOL. 1
 (PRESSURE SOUNDS) 1997

[Listens, then laughs] This is a bit clod-hopping isn't it? [More laughter] This is some kind of Adrian Sherwood thing?

It's not a Sherwood production. It's from 1978. I think this would have been quite a shock in 1978 but it's definitely quite loose.

It's Prince Fari from Cru Tyff Dub Encounter Volume One. Fari produced it rather than Adrian, though there's a picture of them both on the back — with Adrian looking very young.

Adrian with hair! It doesn't quite feel like any other reggae record from that time. And it's interesting that Fari was using slightly leftfield sounds for that production. Dennis Bovell was using things on the first Sits album like boxing matches, dropping forks on tables.

So what was your approach to working with Prince Fari on Volume Three?

Du approach was to say that we understood everything he was telling us — even though we couldn't understand a word because he had a very thick patois and an incredibly deep voice. They'd run the track and we'd just do something. I still think that's a really brilliant dub album.

You also worked with Sherwood on African Head Charge's records...

Yes. He used to get in two piano players, me and a guy called Fat Fingers. Fat Fingers would arrive with a big fat cake that his mum had made and a portable television, because he knew he would be in Berry Street [Studio] all night and maybe wouldn't get to play a note. Adrian got very involved in convoluted hooking up of various effects in the studio, which meant that musicians would be sitting around for a seriously long time. I like the idea of getting in and out. This session for Art I played for the length of the track and that was the end of my session. I like that and you probably get just as good results.

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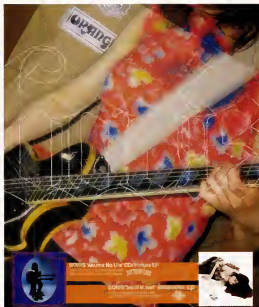


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But your interest in reggae goes way back?

Yeah, I still listen to the fantastic triple set of Big Youth that Steve Barrow put out. There was a certain period around 1973 or something when they produced hundreds of amazing tracks. Just gorgeous music.

JOHN STEVENS SPONTANEOUS MUSIC ORCHESTRA "ONE-TWO"

FROM MOUTHPIECE (EMANEM) 2000, REC. 1973

Oh, it's a John Stevens workshop piece, isn't it? I think the first time I heard SMO they were playing "Sustain Piece" on [BBC Radio's] Jazz Club. I was a little disappointed by Karyobin because it sounded a little more conventional, more like a jazz record. With his workshop pieces John would take a very simple idea, which can get really confusing very easily.

These pieces still get used in workshops. I think

Eddie Prevost still uses them.

Does he? Maggie Nicols is very articulate in speaking about his pieces.

Has the London Improvisers Orchestra ever used any of John's pieces?

Caroline Kraabel did a piece, which isn't in the book, called "Mouse in The Desert" a couple of times. This is a terrible confession for someone who is helping to get his book *Search And Reflect* reprinted but although I felt massive admiration for John's workshop pieces, they're not pieces I felt comfortable using. I think it's because John's approach to music is 180 degrees different to mine. John always had a quite serious spiritual side to him. I think I'm the least spiritual person I know. John often had the idea of things developing from a seed, whereas I'm more of an everything happening all at once kind of person. He's Webern and I'm Charles Ives.

They're more strategies for getting musicians to think outside the box?

They're certainly that. "Sustain Piece" for example is such a simple idea – you just play on your out breath and you don't play on your in breath. That's a beautiful piece – which is also on this album. "Mouthpiece" itself is a fantastic piece. "One-Two" is hard to listen to but it's great that this stuff is available. There was one piece by John where as soon as you played together the piece ended. In fact I saw a performance of this where they stood for ages in silence, then they played exactly at the same moment. So the first note was the end of the piece. Martin Davidson [of Emanem Records] is putting out a Spontaneous Music Ensemble record which has a piece called "Flower" which he couldn't put out before because there's so much 'print through', which is not surprising because it's extremely minimal music. It's Trevor Watts on soprano and John on [drum] kit and at the beginning Trevor plays just one ataccato note with a huge amount of silence and John plays just one on the side of a drum and there's these huge areas of silence. It's a really radical piece and the fact that it develops into something different is also really exciting.

You helped put together a Web archive of material relating to John for BBC Radio 3...

Yeah. The BBC took it down for some technical reason and put up a biography, which is completely inaccurate. So it's in total limbo. Someone else should host it. We had a gallery of John's paintings.

John was obviously very influential both on you and the UK improvised music community generally.

A lot of the quiet music that gets played today – for example the Roger Smith/Louis Moholo record that's just come out – is post-John Stevens. Louis and John were really tight and Louis plays John's old kit. I had the idea some time ago of putting Louis together with Roger, because Louis has this amazing dynamic control and Roger Smith plays very quiet Siwash guitar. Virtually all improvised music that gets played in this country is somehow post-John Stevens. []



The life aquatic

Kali Fasteau, at home in Newburgh, New York

After a life of travelling and gathering musical information from many of the world's cultures, multi-instrumentalist Kali Z Fasteau propagates her oceanic spiritual jazz in the tradition of the late John Coltrane.

Words: Julian Cowley. Photo: Anna Schori

"Making music for me is a way of reaching a higher state of awareness," multi-instrumentalist Kali Z Fasteau tells me from her home in Newburgh, New York State. A series of eight fine, imaginatively fertile releases on her own Flying Note label have shown Fasteau exploring creative tributaries flowing from the use of expanded jazz practices that broke during the 1960s. Her recent CD *Making Waves* finds her in the company of saxophonist Kidd Jordan, bassist Sironne and pianist Bobby Few, distinguished contributors to that decade's elemental opening up of musical possibilities. Aligning herself with spiritual yearnings that have audibly pervaded and energised free jazz, she regards music making as a process of "shaping the divine energy as it manifests through me, with utmost devotion to developing exquisite sound quality".

During the 1970s Fasteau formed a close personal and working relationship – in a duo called The Sea Ensemble – with bassist and bass clarinet player Rafael Garrett, who appeared on four of John Coltrane's albums, including *OM*, the intense, mystical meditation from 1965. Garrett, who died in 1969, became her main mentor. "Rafael had a highly kinetic, genial and emotional presence style," she recalls. "His wide open, all-inclusive concept of free music, his multi-instrumentalism, his intellectualism, his knowledge of the latest philosophical and spiritual developments, made a glorious match for my own directions in music and life. We played many hundreds of concerts together in Europe, Africa and Asia. He taught me extended string techniques and the keys to woodwind vitality, bamboo flute making, Tai Chi Chuan, Buddhism, and macrobiotic cooking. We shared an iconoclasm, an anarchism regarding many formal aspects of art and life." A taste of their fluent, free-range duo improvising can be heard on the double CD *Memors Of A Dream* (2000).

The orientation Fasteau developed out of those formative years with Garrett has more recently attracted to her projects musicians of the calibre of drummers Rashied Ali and Hamid Drake, saxophonists Noah Howard and Joe McPhee, and bassist William Parker. "My selection of collaborators is based first of all on my appreciation for and resonance with the music they make," she observes. "Their sound moves me and I hear a musical kinship with my sounds and approach to music. Then, meeting them in person, we find social rapport. I enjoy playing with people I've known for many years – we know each other's musical language. And I enjoy the freshness and discovery of playing with new people. With spontaneous music, the joy is in inspiring each other to create new musical ideas with fire and beauty."

Among the instruments Fasteau herself uses are soprano saxophone, ney and kaval (Arabic flutes), cello, sheng (Chinese mouth organ), and Japanese shakuhachi, voice, keyboards and bemburu (a percussively sounded musical bow from Brazil). Her selection reflects a generous musical upbringing at home, graduate studies in World Music at Wesleyan

University, Connecticut and long periods of travelling, listening to local musics and learning from them. Her family included professional classical musicians, so she grew up appreciating Bach, Gesualdo, Bartók, Stravinsky and Debussy, as well as medieval European music. As a child she was also exposed to the jazz of Miles Davis, Thelonious Monk, Ahmad Jamal and Errol Garner. But, she recollects, "One of the most inspiring moments of my musical childhood was hearing a record of Miriam Makeba my friend played for me when I was seven." A later revelatory moment came with "an 'ack' epiphany at the Pacific Ocean, that clearly revealed and confirmed to me that I live to make music. Also, I remember saxophonist Charles Lloyd playing an outdoor concert at my college, Reed, in Portland, Oregon and blowing everyone's minds."

Subsequently a nomadic existence brought Fasteau into direct contact with new worlds of sound. "For 14 years I lived on four continents, in hatched huts in tiny villages, and in the cities, to experience many concepts of the divine in music. In Turkey, I studied Sufi ney, Arabic rhythms and makam [scale systems]. In India I studied many fascinating Hindustani ragas through the vocal music. Everywhere I travel, I play concerts and share my music. I'm always listening for unusual and beautiful sounds, compelling and spiritual intensity in music, and when I hear it, it always inspires me."

Fasteau regards singing as a special element in her work and experience has confirmed for her the primacy of vocal music. "In my travels I have found that people all over the world relate immediately to the singing voice, transcending language. Usually I prefer to sing without the specific, linear framework of words. I create my own international vocalese, a kind of speaking in tongues, from sounds of the many languages I have heard in my travels and from listening to nature."

Naturally enough, the instruments help shape and steer the music she composes and plays. As well as using previously existing instruments, she crafts her own; and during the last few years she has also ventured into electronics. "I use a global array of instruments, and make my own flutes. Selecting sounds and instruments while performing, I am always free to either stay in the same groove or to change. Each instrument suggests its own music to me. I revel in the vivid palette of sounds offered by their unique voices. Especially with handmade instruments: each bamboo flute, each sanza (thumb piano), each mizmar [Afghan reed instrument], will have a different sound from another of the same type, not only because of its size and tuning, also because of the varying densities and intrinsic shape of the wood. While I have generally preferred the incredible richness of acoustic and organic instruments, there are certain possibilities with synthesizer and signal processor that I'm exploring, keeping an ear to sound quality above all. I think it's valuable to use electronic instruments to humanise them and show how they can also be expressive of emotion and beauty."

By running her Flying Note imprint, Fasteau has extended the autonomy of her music making to the production of CDs. This perpetuates the line of independent free jazz labels that have stood outside the commercial mainstream for practical, aesthetic and political reasons. She records most of her concerts as well as setting up recording sessions. Then, after intensive listening, she chooses music to include and issue, attending to the special qualities of each piece when determining the sequence of tracks. "I consider both flow and contrast in this process. The music comes first, the spirit, the feeling, the sound ideas; the music suggests to me the structuring of the album, the titles and the theme."

Her recordings reveal a taste for African polyrhythms and the microtonality of Asian scales, as well as for the surging energies of free jazz and a celebratory spirit that connects with her enthusiasm for soul and gospel. The title of her 2003 release *Oneness* indicates that Fasteau strives to realise a unifying vision that simultaneously pervades and exists at a level beyond her surface eclecticism and the unpredictable play of creative spontaneity.

This vision is mystical but not otherworldly in any evasive sense. It has, she makes clear, an organic and physiological basis, and it bears profound socio-political implications. "Of all the arts," she says, "I love music the most because it carries the greatest amount of information directly to the feeling centres of the heart and spirit, as well as to the brain. All of the atoms, molecules, cells and organs of living beings move and vibrate in tandem rhythms. Musical tones have high frequency rhythms, and together with lower frequency (audible) rhythms, stimulate us to new mental/physical/spiritual experiences. Music can be a powerful healing force because nearly heard contours of sound create new pathways in the brain. Sound actually shapes reality. Musical forms simultaneously reflect and can create and change social structures and behaviour patterns by introducing new thought forms, transcending the conscious import of words. The form of the music can be seen after the fact of its creation. I perform on the threshold of the unknown. The real message of my music, and of free music in general, is an open invitation, showing people a way to live their own lives creatively, fearlessly, joyfully, unphilosophy by preset programs."

The ancient Chinese philosophy of Taoism has proven valuable to her in terms of pragmatic decision making. "I apply the principles of Taoism to music to guide my spontaneous composition," she explains. "According to this theory, music lives in a multi-dimensional sphere encompassing all possible sounds – the high and low, soft and loud, slow and fast, rough and smooth, legato and staccato, which can be understood as having Yin and Yang characteristics. The dynamic, ever-changing balance of complementary opposites expresses the joyful unity of spirit and energy in sound. The Tao of music encourages innovation. It's also satisfyingly inclusive, with universal application, embracing the infinite variety of sounds worldwide." □
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Bouquets of barbed wire

After two decades exploring the ugly psyche of the American underground, Australian expat JG Thirlwell is incubating a brighter strain of Foetus music with his new album, *Love*, alongside his ongoing sleaze soundtrack and electronica projects, Steroid Maximus and Manorexia.

Words: Alan Licht. Photos: Daniëlle van Ark





The Brooklyn block leading to the disused ice cream factory that JG Thirlwell has been living and working in for the past two decades is lined with barbed wire – fitting, one might suppose, for a man who used to take the stage with a baseball bat or surrounded by newly severed pigs' heads. Once inside his tastefully decorated loft, there's a panoramic view of criss-crossing off ramps from the Brooklyn Queens Expressway, high rises owned by Jehovah's Witnesses, a concrete playground and the adjacent Projects – the urban jungle in full sprawl. Looking over at the corner of the left dedicated to Thirlwell's recording setup, I notice a wall covered with various primitive ceremonial masks – also appropriate given his aliases over the years (Chit Run, Frank Want) and the disdain for using his own image on album covers, not to mention the multiple variations on the Foetus name he has used since its inception as his music making project more than 20 years ago. You've Got Foetus On Your Breath, Scraping Foetus Off The Wheel, Foetus Interruptus, Foetus Inc and now simply Foetus – these names will be familiar to anyone who surveyed the nonsh corners of the underground rock scene of the 80s, as will the familiar red, white and black self-designed album covers and one-syllable, four-letter album titles (Dear, Ache, Hole and Nail being the first four).

But if Thirlwell once bridged the gap between Soft Cell (with whom he once guested onstage for a cover of 'Succede's' 'Ghost Rider') and the Nick Cave/Lydia Lunch/Neubauten/Swans circle (all of whom he's worked with in some capacity), his recent projects – the swinging sounds of the big band/bachelor pad/spy movie-inspired Steroid Maximus, the darker, sparser instrumentals of Manorexia, sound installations curated by Swedish artist CM Von Hausswolff, cartoon soundtracks, commissions from Bang On A Can and The Kronos Quartet – may well give him more in common with John Zorn or Elliott Sharp.

It all seems to come to a head on the new Foetus album, *Love*. 'Like the French song, 'Mon Agonie Douce', that started life as a Manorexia song,' the dim-mannered fellow behind the Foetus persona tells

me. "Then I said if I added this element it would take it into Steroid Maximus territory and then I realised if I put a vocal on it would be a Foetus song. They don't usually crosshatch like that, but that one in particular did. When I started, I kinda wanted to make a slow album, ballads, and I started making some songs in that direction. Each time I work on an album I have periods where I go away and let it gestate, and digest what I've done, and on one of the early gestation periods I realised that it was feeling a little turgid and I had to give myself permission to infuse it with this bombastic feeling that I really felt it needed, and that is really part of me, which kept the same kind of spirit but made it more explosive. There was a real conscious decision to develop from what I've done before, to really experiment as opposed to having a craft and exercising the craft." Most of the tracks feature harpsichord. "Everything it invokes seems right for what I was writing," Thirlwell continues. "It can be delicate or sinister. It also gave me a chance to work with things in the higher frequency range – a lot of my recordings get girdlocked in the midrange, harpsichord and tambourines can give a sparkle and energy that doesn't roadblock the mids."

The results sound like something Serge Gainsbourg might envision had he grown up listening to Alice Cooper. "I definitely was trying different vocal stuff on this album," he admits, "and I didn't really notice Alice Cooper being in there, but sometimes if I listen to old Alice Cooper stuff I can hear inflections that he does that have crept into my stuff, some guttural things that he does. Some of those records were pivotal to me as a kid. If you listen to those albums like *School's Out* and *Billion Dollar Babies* and *Killer*, I look at some of the musical choices that they made, in terms of jumping from style to style, and I think that's something that reverberated with me, because I jump styles a lot within one album."

By the time Thirlwell migrated to London from his native Australia in 1978 it was punk rock that was providing the inspiration. "When I actually first started going into the studio, I think that punk rock and the

immediately post-punk energy really put the medium into the hands of the proletariat," he says. "It demystified the process and first it said anyone can do this, and then it said it's not about technique, it's about ideas. That's kind of where I jumped off from. That sort of energy's what drew me to London. I knew I wanted to do something in music and I wasn't too sure what. I bought some synthesizers, making tapes and stuff like that, and there was a lot of amazing stuff happening at that time. The week after I got there was when the first Public Image shows were. Rough Trade was just starting up and a lot of people were doing DIY stuff from the embers of punk. There was a lot of fragmentation that happened really quickly. People were experimenting a lot. I'd see bands like This Heat, Throbbing Gristle, Gang Of Four, Joy Division, they were playing all the time. Scritti Politti were one of my favourite groups to see live. They did a lot of improv and making songs up on the spot. I was encouraged by one of my roommates at the time to go out and play with some people, and they had a group called prag VEC. We played together for a while."

Meeting Steve Stapleton of Nurse With Wound proved more decisive. "He used to work down the street from me, I was working at Virgin Records on Oxford Street. Steve came into the store one day. It was right when the first Nurse With Wound album had come out and we had it in stock. He was asking me about it, so I was describing it to him, not telling me who he was. He was impressed that I'd actually listened to it. So he told me who he was and we started talking and became friends. He exposed me to a lot of stuff and introduced me to William Bennett – who I'd previously seen playing guitar with Lora Logic." He wound up being invited to record with Stapleton, the results appearing on the obscure Nurse With Wound 12" *Insect & Individual Silenced*. "There wouldn't be any instruments, in particular – there would be objects, or he'd be recording something and then two weeks later, go back and he'd processed it so much that I didn't know what it was. I went into that same studio, booked a day and in that day recorded and mixed both sides

of the first Foetus single. I don't think I could work at that pace now [laughs]. In the first 18 months that I was doing Foetus stuff I released three singles, two albums and a 12" EP, all on my own label, which I distributed myself [Self Immoilation]. I was making it up as I went along. I had a ton of ideas that were spewing into a million directions at once – they probably still do."

Thirlwell's familiarity with modern composition, specifically minimalism, also dates back to this time. "When I started doing Foetus," he recalls, "that was when I was first exposed to serial music, Philip Glass, Steve Reich, and reading John Cage, and the early singles have a lot of those ideas in them. On the back of the first single it says, 'Forthcoming releases: Foetus On The Beach', which was a reference to [Glass's] *Einstein On The Beach*. There's been consciousness all along of contemporary composers but I haven't studied it in school." Last autumn, Bang On A Can performed his piece *Anabrosis*. "We'd been talking for some time about doing it. I thought a lot about where I wanted the piece to go and I'd heard a lot of their works and seen them play live a lot, I knew what they were capable of, but it was my first time writing for a chamber ensemble. I decided to write a piece that I was happy with and then work backwards in re-voicing the melodies for the instrumentation that they had. It grew out of a piece of fake 12-tone music which didn't really adhere strictly to 12 tones but used that as a jumping off point. But at the same time it's just as informed by *Morricone* or anything else that I listen to. I don't know how other composers work, but I'll think about something, I'll think about the mood and start to sing the melody and that's where it comes from. Hopefully it's something I've made up," he chuckles.

The Kronos Quartet work is to premiere next year, but is still being composed. "I have some ideas about how to start," says Thirlwell. "This time I don't think I'm going to try to write for ten orchestras and then try to reduce it down to a string quartet [laughs], but I'm definitely going to try out different ways of doing it,

and I think it's going to have three or four movements. Part of my nature, which I've tried to shape a little bit in recent years, is to try and condense the entire history of recorded music into one piece, and I'm going to try and shy away from that."

GM Von Hauswoff's frequent installations also proved stimulating to Thirlwell. "The Hauswoff things have been really interesting," he says. "They were curated by him for this installation workshop thing in Copenhagen called *Disturbances*, and the concept that he came up with was using 11 or 12 people, slicing up the frequency spectrum and giving each person a slice of the frequency spectrum to work with. You're creating it on site, but also within the constraints and inspiration of the architectural environment, and to a certain extent you're also hearing what all the other people are doing. When you're done, you leave your little workstation and you're replaced by a looping CO, and then they all interact. We did that again in Oslo the following year. The previous one was a lot more clamorous, and then everyone seemed to go a lot more meditative. But the first year was in a space that had a lot more antechambers, the architecture and the acoustics were working together in a lot of different ways. This time it was all in one room. We're doing it again in October in Paris for *Nuit Blanche*, when the museums are kept open all night. This time we're bringing in a visual element, which is also going to be about frequencies. Light frequencies will be generated by the sound frequencies, and it will reflect the space as well."

Foetus has largely been a one man studio operation, with guests participating from time to time. Initially live shows were solo performances with backing tapes, but by 1988 Thirlwell had started organizing groups to back him up on tour. The *Steroid Maximus* and *Manorexia* albums are still completely recorded and played by Thirlwell, but in 2002 *Steroid Maximus* became a live entity as an 18 piece group. "When I did that in LA I felt like I'd died and gone to heaven," he sighs. "It's the closest I've gotten to some kind of real

feeling of representing where I'm at musically, at that time, onstage. It's not easy to do and I've had to fight to realise it. The last time I was touring with a band I felt like, I've done this. There's gotta be more. It was very disenchanting. Now we're about to do a tour where it's a *Steroid Maximus* set and then I'm singing with the same ensemble, doing the *Love* album."

Thirlwell began the *Steroid Maximus* project in 1990, his first real departure from the post-industrial sound of Foetus and other 80s projects like *Wiseblood* (with Swans' Roli Mosmann) or *Shinkfish* (with Lydia Lunch). "*Steroid Maximus* grew out of Foetus albums at that time being almost 50 per cent instrumental," he says, "and I wanted something that would showcase the instrumental side of what I was doing, give me a chance to collaborate with other people and make real cinematic music – there's always been a cinematic slant to what I do and what I want it to sound like. And it was a way of divorcing it from lyrics, which put a literal interpretation on what I did. Plus there was a perception of, if it's a Foetus record it's going to be slobbering, violent, masochistic, blah blah blah, and I think that got in the way of the fact that there was this other thing going on." The big band sound is another early favourite of Thirlwell's – he recalls "digging Hollywood jazz-variety show style, especially high energy intense screaming brass as a kid". Lydia Lunch's 1979 big band excursion *Queen Of Siam* "was definitely something I heard that struck a chord in me. Sometimes I hear things and I go yeah, I've always wanted to hear that. But in the same way I think that Alice Cooper and Alex Harvey had both done big band kind of things too."

Manorexia, in turn, grew out of *Steroid Maximus*. "*Steroid Maximus* was meticulously crafted and I wanted something more openended, more spacious and sprawling," he explains. "Some of the sounds that I mutate and create in samples and manipulation are very fleeting in the context of what I do in these tightly arranged orchestrations. *Manorexia* was a way of letting those things breathe. When I was creating it I spent a lot of time with my eyes closed, it was a really



organic thing. On the first Manoreesa album, the first 45 minutes are split up into discrete chunks but it was really conceived as one long piece that never ended – but then it did end, after 45 minutes [laughs]. There was a freeing process to that, and then the second album grew out of that and started to become a bit more crafted. I'm working on the third part of that trilogy at the moment."

Thirlwell is an avid soundtrack listener. "I really enjoy punishingly over the top Hollywood action scores by people like John Debnay, Marco Beltrami, Alan Silvestri and Danny Elfman," he enthuses. For the last two years, he's been scoring the Cartoon Network series *Venture Brothers*. "It's probably the most rigorous exercise in scoring that I've done," he says, "it's just been such a large amount of material. Working in television, it's a different medium and you're really working by committee. It's so foreign to me. I'm used to creating what I do, mixing it myself, making the artwork, presenting it absolutely as one person's vision. Here I'm part of a group of people which is then part of a machine, and that machine imposes limitations on what you're doing. I haven't had any limitations on what I've been able to do musically, but I don't have any input into what the script is like or what the animation is like. But I'm not even there for the mix and I know that the hierarchy of mixing cartoons is: vocals are up there, sound design's here and then music's down there somewhere. It's kinda heartbreaking when that happens, but it's also a lesson in what you can and can't do and what you're up against with the guy who's mixing it, who's also the sound designer. It's interesting. I went to this panel that [film composer] David Shire was on, a couple of weeks ago, and he's talking about the score of *The Taking of Pelham 123*. He said the instrumentation of that was in the higher frequencies and lower frequencies, because he knew he had to leave a hole in midrange for the subway train [laughs]. And that's really what you've got to do in these situations."

Thirlwell was also a sought-after remixer early on. "Yeah, I was the golden child for a couple of years there," he smiles. "and I think that's sort of the wave that those things go in. I lead doing them to start with. I think I got painted into a corner with them and what I was getting offered, because I did this remix for Prong called 'Prove You Wrong' [1991], and it was a bit of a hit, and that was the first Metal remix that there'd been. I started to get a lot of people on the strength of that, and the next thing you know I'm doing Pantera, Megadeth, I became the go-to Metal remix guy, and I'm having dinner with Rob Halford [laughs]. I think I rode that wave for a while and it probably detracted a little from my own stuff, because it was so easy to do and I was doing so many of them. It was a situation that came along, I knew I could do something interesting with them at the time, but I don't think that I was elevating my craft from it. I think I fell into a bit of a formula with the way I approached things and I kind of regret that."

I wonder if his remixes helped pave the way for the deal with Sony that produced one album, *Gash*, in 1995. "The Sony thing had been bubbling for a while, but it started with Nirvana breaking, that's when there was a feeding frenzy, and it went for a while because there were other people being successful in the wake of that, and I knew some people in that circle. And I think when Nine Inch Nails got successful, and I'd been remixed Nine Inch Nails, I think they looked at that connection and saw me as some kind of mentor... I don't know what they fuckin' thought, I don't know if anyone up there knew what was going on, really." Thirlwell relates a series of A&R troubles after signing, and remembers that the week after *Gash* was released, a directive "came down from business affairs in Japan that they weren't going to promote the second album, after I was negotiating for a year to have two albums firm. So then we started the process of getting me out of my contract – the week that album came out. The whole thing was just heartbreaking to build up to this thing where you think you're gonna have a solid infrastructure, and it's just

pulled out after all this work. It was horrible. And that was the beginning of the big crash in my life. I toured a lot after that, I think I really lost my way for a year or two there. In my touring I started to become really 'rock', and I look at it now and I go 'How did it get so rock?' Because that album was a great distillation in being this form of Foetus rock music, it's really savage and pretty much the pinnacle of what I was trying to get at, this pre-apocalyptic intense music. But then the live manifestation of that became way too rock. At the same time [in July 1996] I did this *Improv thing over at the Anchorage* and that came out as an album too [York, by Foetus Symphony Orchestra] and I think that was trying to succeed at something else, and that didn't quite crystallise too. So there's documentary evidence of my downfall. And hopefully documentary evidence of my phoenix-like rise from the ashes."

With all these activities and identities, Thirlwell never comes off as a pop chameleon – on an artistic level, it all seems a part of one tapestry, and on a business level, well, there's just a lot of subsidiaries of Foetus Inc. And he's eager to keep moving forward. "Now I'm almost looking back at the first *Manoreesa* album and the headspace that I got to to create that, and what a joy that that was, and how I'd moved on creatively from that by the time I'd got to the second *Manoreesa* album, because it already had a history. I'm really happy to shed these histories and start again. That's why it's exciting for me to work on something like the *freq* out project. Especially because you really have to be there, in the space, to experience it. There may be ways of recreating it but it's something that's very immediate. And to me, doing the 18 piece band thing, everyone says are you gonna document it, but you know, you have to be there. Of course I could document it but... everyone is so eager to document and blog and put everything up these days, and I think there's something to be said for the fact that we're sending signals up into outer space that will reverberate forever, and they don't have to be captured on a server somewhere." □ Love is out this month on *Breman*



The gambler

From Globe Unity Orchestra through his 35 year old trio with Evan Parker and Paul Lovens to his latest project, *Monk's Casino*, German free jazz pianist and FMP co-founder Alexander Von Schlippenbach has always played for high stakes.

Words: David Keenan. Photos: Kai Von Rabenau





"I am a jazz musician," declares pianist, improviser and composer Alexander von Schlippenbach, "at least a white, European, German one. Besides that, I don't see much of a difference between what I do and the American progressive jazz tradition, certainly nothing like a separate European jazz. If I like someone's playing I don't give a damn where he comes from, if we have to distinguish between approaches at all, then we should think more in terms of improvised music and free jazz. Improvised music can be more or less anything, whereas free jazz is definitely coming from the jazz tradition. I prefer to call my music: free jazz. That hasn't changed over the years."

This commitment to the basic structural tenets of jazz manifests itself in Schlippenbach's technique, facilitating a prodigious approach to improvisation that is as likely to reference traditional jazz players like Oscar Peterson and Horace Silver as it is to incorporate the fancifully tactile language pioneered by Cecil Taylor. "It's a good idea to compare the piano to tuned drums," Schlippenbach admits, referencing Taylor's infamous dictum regarding his vision of the instrument, now reborn as sacred critical shorthand for any player whose music foregrounds the physical aspect of the piano itself. "There's certainly a strong percussive attack to my style," he continues, "but as with Taylor himself, this is not the only thing. The piano is probably the most complicated instrument in terms of technique and there are still many things to discover. But melodic and structural concerns are of the same importance as dynamism and percussive attack. I would hope that there were more qualities to my music than simply audibility ones."

Schlippenbach's vision of a total music draws sustenance from an aggressive push and pull between rigorous architectural detail and performance velocity. The one major jazz figure with a comparable approach is pianist Theodosious Monk, who has been a lifetime obsession for Schlippenbach, which has just reached an apex with the release of Monk's *Casino*. This ambitious triple CD set reconfigures the jazz composer's complete songbook for continuous live performance with the help of his quartet, *Die Enttäuschung* (The Disappointment) – trumpeter Axel Dörner, bass clarinetist Rudi Mahall, bassist Jan Roder and drummer Ute Jennesen – with who he already dedicated much of their own back catalogue to radical rereleases of Monk material. The title effectively suggests the kind of playful liberties they take with some of the tracks, condensing thematic material into rudely truncated caricatures and working outwards melodic forms into dense, information-heavy medleys. It also references their willingness to engage with Monk on his own terms, to acknowledge his musical gamesmanship and work with the hard as deal while keeping an eye out for compositional gambits – Schlippenbach trading instruments with Dörner; bringing his partner Ak Takase in on toy piano – that might raise both the stakes and the energy levels.

"Monk's compositions represent an artistic perfection on the highest level," Schlippenbach affirms. "Just a beautiful, unique music that will always speak to anybody who can hear. I have tried to play Monk's pieces ever since I started playing jazz, and I have arranged a few of them for orchestra. Later I played them with *Die Enttäuschung*, which is a real new band. They have played a lot of Monk before and had some exceptional arrangements. When we played them together, there was something amazing about it and suddenly we had the idea to play them all in one performance. We got through and it came out well

in the end – the CD is there! Monk's stuff is great practice too, and the real reward is the knowledge of the compositions."

All this talk of beautiful arrangements and the virtues of practice might not immediately square with the pianist's ferociously experimental stage, which dates from the early days of Free Music Production, aka FMP, the co-operative founded by himself, saxophonist Peter Brötzmann, bassist Peter Kowald and bassist/producer Joel Gubers in order to document the aggressively atonal free jazz coming out of Germany in the late 1960s. But any attempt to fit Schlippenbach into the role of fervent avant provocateur is destined to fail. As a composer his background is in academia and as a jazz player he comes from deep inside the pocket.

"I had piano lessons as a child, so that was my first approach to music," he explains. "My first interest was in classical composers. I have never listened to much rock and pop. I always preferred things like Mexican and Bavarian brass music, for example. I first discovered jazz by listening to somebody who could play boogie and blues on the piano, and I went off and read all about the history of the music. At the same time I became a passionate listener of the *Voice Of America Jazz Hour* on AFN. I used to set an alarm clock for midnight and had to go to a secret room with my transistor radio because I was attending a boarding school in Bavaria at the time. I started listening when I was 12 and followed the same regime every night for years."

After leaving school, he continued his musical studies in Berlin under the tutelage of composer Bernd Alois Zimmermann, who committed suicide in 1970, nine months after the premiere of his masterpiece, *Requiem For A Young Poet*. "Apart from being a really great composer, Zimmermann was a man of universal knowledge," says Schlippenbach. "He had a vision of the global shape of time which formed the basis of his concept of pluralistic methods of composition." Zimmermann extrapolated his method of pluralistic composition from a singular vision of time as a concept derived from the simultaneous intersection of past, present and future, an idea that ties in with the 'eternal now' of free improvisation, as well as modernist stream of consciousness writers like Jack Kerouac and James Joyce, and psychedelic evangelists like The Grateful Dead and Timothy Leary. Applying this psychic breakthrough to music, Zimmermann attempted to articulate a wild avant garde synthesis that incorporated quotes lifted from various parallel historic streams into operatic, electronic and jazz derived forms. "He was my most important teacher and my studies with him have influenced and formed my whole understanding of music, especially concerning concepts of composition," continues Schlippenbach. "Of course, he was very interested in jazz and in the 60s he started to work with The Manfred Schoof Quintet, of which I was the pianist. From that time on, most of his pieces had parts for jazz and improvisation, and we always played them."

Anyone looking to isolate the exact moment that the German free music scene was born would do well to track the fallout from the exclusive interaction between the Cologne based musicians centered around Schlippenbach and trumpeter and composer Manfred Schoof, and Wuppertal's Peter Brötzmann, Peter Kowald and Swedish drummer Sven Åke Johansson. The Schoof group started out playing bebop in the early 60s; but, under the influence of the New Thing in

the United States, they began to integrate elastic structures that encouraged improvisation without the use of chords or traditional changes. They had first been introduced to this approach while working with European free music catalyst and bandleader Günter Hampel. An ear-peeling encounter with Brötzmann's unequivocal free jazz trio in the mid-60s was all that it took to loosen the mental shackles completely.

"There was an optimistic mood among us all," Schlippenbach recalls. "A feeling that we had found something that was truly our own, that was new and that was even kind of successful. For a while we had some regular workshops together, thanks to the money that we managed to press out of cultural administrators. Kowald was always good at that. We founded FMP in order to get the music out ourselves, and we started to establish performance platforms like the Workshop Freie Musik and the Total Music Meeting. But all of this activity wasn't unique to Germany. It was happening simultaneously in Holland and in the UK. It was certainly a revolutionary period, but I was less affected by any of the political aspects than by the actual music we were making."

Indeed, Schlippenbach professes a lack of interest in what he sees as the more ephemeral aspects of musical discourse, rejecting everything from postmodern tactics and revolutionary politics to both the mystical/religious bent of the American free musicians and the "profoundly secular" stance of the FMP crew. He's also got little time for 'prepared instrumentation, though he has very occasionally dabbed in it. He prefers, he says, to focus on "much more serious ways of doing piano preparation". Like Monk, he comes across as a highly individual thinker, intent on psychically shielding himself from any outside influences that might infect or otherwise corrupt his investigations into the mediated flux of pure sound. But despite his aversion to the dictates of the group-mind, he's been one of the few modern leaders to do consistently interesting work within the framework of an improvising big band. The most important of these remains the still sporadically active Globe Unity Orchestra, which combines Zimmermann's concepts of the "global shape of time" with the spirit of internationalism reflected in all-star line-ups of heavyweight improvisors like Schoof, Brötzmann, Kowald, trumpeter Kenny Wheeler, transorbital Paul Rutherford, drummers Hans Bennink, Paul Lovens and Mani Neumeier (of Krautrock power trio Guru Guru) and guitarist Derek Bailey. "The Globe Unity Orchestra was founded in 1966," Schlippenbach relates. "I was always interested in the idea of trying out our new music on a full orchestra. Then I got a commission from the RIAS-Radio to write a piece for a large group. The title of the piece was "Globe-Unity" and that was later used as the name of the band. The piece was performed at the Berlin Jazz Festival in 1966. In the beginning the group was a combination of Schoof's quartet and Brötzmann's trio. By taking some more players on board we brought it up to a kind of big band level. In the beginning we played compositions and most of them were written by the members of the band. But after a while we came to a certain form of collective free improvisation."

This "certain form" soon established itself as an immediately recognisable Central European free jazz aesthetic, a dense, often impenetrable collective sound that sandblasted the subtleties of exchange and the democratic give and take favoured by UK improvisors like John Stevens's Spontaneous Music Ensemble in favour of a wildly elusive simultaneity with the

terrifying aspect of a mile-high wall of tortuously bent metal. Although there are certain historical parallels for this kind of missed polyphonic assault—from John Coltrane's *Ascension* and Stockhausen's *Rhymen* through early, wild style New Orleans marches and Schlippenbach's much loved Bavarian brass bands—their recordings are informed by a crucial new post-industrial aesthetic. They harness the same kind of volume and power fueling the psychedelic rock then flowering in the USA, and, a bit closer to home, the likes of Tangerine Dream, Can and Amon Düül. The Globe Unity Orchestra's vast, murky sound might have effectively amplified the revolutionary tumult of the times, but it was extractable as much to extra-musical variables—like minuscule budgets, limited availability of equipment and the fact that no one had yet worked out how to properly capture this music on tape—as it was to a deliberate musical aesthetic. Either way, it actively defines all of the best recordings of the era, from Brötzmann's epochal 1968 album *Machine Gun* and Manfred Schoof's great *Euphoric Echoes* (1969), through to the collected radio performances bundled on *Globe Unity 67/70* and Schlippenbach's own 1969 recording, *The Living Music*.

A ferocious septet performance recorded the same day as Brötzmann's legendary *Nipples* album in 1969 and recently reissued as part of *Atavistic's* Unheard Music Series, Schlippenbach named *The Living Music*—and the ensemble that played at FMP's first Total Music Meeting in November 1970—after Julian Beck and Judith Malina's Living Theatre, but he now insists that it was just a convenient name. There were no real parallels, he says, between the theatre group's multi-disciplinary concept and his own form-gobbling aesthetic. But Hamburg 74, another Unheard Music reissue that pitches a classic Globe Unity Orchestra line-up—including Derek Bailey on guitar, Brötzmann and Evan Parker on saxophones, bassist Peter Kowald and drummers Han Bennink and Paul Lovens—against the Choir of The NOR-Broadcast, is undeniably inspired by absurd theatre, with an arch ensemble performance that falls somewhere between the high/low dialectics of Frank Zappa and an apocalyptic European Third Stream. "The combination of The NOR-Broadcast Choir and Globe Unity was an idea of Michel Naura, who was leading the jazz department of the NOR (Radio) at that time," Schlippenbach explains. "In the end it came out sort of humorous, which is as it was, but it wasn't really my basic intention. The whole notion of deflating classical music with absurd humor is something that doesn't interest me at all. In fact, I'm actively against it. Most of these kinds of attempts are cheap and tasteless and have no meaning at all. Of course, there is a place for humor in music, but not in those contexts."

Indeed, Schlippenbach seems to have little interest in the more historically potent corners of his back catalogue, preferring to focus on expanding his own musical vocabulary instead of revisiting past glories. But he's still happy to see so much of his work coming back into print. "I don't make much effort to rerelease my early stuff," he says. "I guess that was the period where we were most consistently trying out experiments in order to expand the palette available to free jazz. But there does seem to have developed some kind of historical interest in it and I've had offers from a few record companies to issue some of it, which has been all right so far." Still, he remains sceptical as to whether any reading of his early discs can shed light on the ongoing arc of his career. "I'm not driving my music in any particular direction,"

he insists. But if one group provides a constant barometer of Schlippenbach's development, it's The Schlippenbach Trio, at 35 years old one of the longest running small jazz groups in the world. Derek Bailey's pithy definition of free jazz (*The Wire* 247)—"It's free and it's jazz"—seems particularly appropriate here, although he might not appreciate its application. The Schlippenbach Trio play free jazz in the most literal sense of that term.

Of all the modern groups to work spontaneous energy and shared musical codes into instant compositional forms, it's the trio of Schlippenbach, Parker and Paul Lovens that most regularly approximate Jack Kerouac's exhilarating vision of the pregnant, speed-of-thought jazz of "working man tenors" in his posthumously published novel, *Visions of Cody*. "They seemed to come to in their horns with a will, saying things, a lot to say, talkative horns, you could almost hear the words and better than that the harmony, made you hear the way to fill up blank spaces of time with the tune and consequence of your hands and breath and soul." The long-running trio also give the lie to the idea that in order to stay fresh and challenging, improvised music has to continuously generate new playing situations and collaborations. Characteristically enough, Schlippenbach has little interest in any superficial notion of "freshness." "It's easy to keep the music fresh by changing things all the time," he shrugs. "So freshness in music is not necessarily a quality. It is much harder to concentrate on something and come through with some kind of result. Whatever our 'shared codes' or 'mantras' might be, they are achievements of the group and help to form our music. This can only happen by working together for a long time. If it works out well, the music takes on more of a shape and develops a much stronger base. We formed the trio in 1970 and we haven't done anything but improvise since the day we started. To me the music that we play is classic free jazz."

The trio's debut recording, *Pakistan Pomade* (1972), originally released on FMP and now reissued as an *Atavistic* CD, sees them at an early exploratory peak, with Lovens's crackling drum work shepherding stray pockets of irregular time with an almost martial insistence, while Parker works a combination of long lines, cross-register answers and tickertape multiphonics into the guts of Schlippenbach's two-fisted conceptions. The pianist's own playing here incorporates objects strategically placed in the innards of the piano, and he balances passages of surgically stimulated texture with convulsive right-hand mechanics, bouts of clear, crisp chords and some swinging angular boogie. Fast forward to 2000's classic live set, *Swinging The BIM*, recorded at Amsterdam's BIM-Huis in 1998, and they sound just as fresh, if a little more prone to the kind of grandstanding set-ups that only a such a longstanding group can pull off without sounding too cute. "The sense of occasion had to be worked for," Parker confesses in the notes.

Outside of his routinely powerful two sides, one of Schlippenbach's most revelatory recent recordings is *America's 300*, a double disc set issued last year on Parker's Psi label that bundles two fully improvised performances, one from New Orleans and the other from Seattle, both of which feature the swarthy with Parker and UK percussionist Paul Lytton. At the time Schlippenbach was actually drafted in as a last minute replacement for bassist Barry Guy in the regular Parker/Guy/Lytton Trio, a fortuitous twist that affords

a weirdly biased view of the internal operations of The Schlippenbach Trio itself. Lytton's playing tends to be a little more dilated and suggestive than Lovens's rapid, "nail it to the floor" approach, orbiting an implied central pulse with complex plots of industrial debris, spins, inverted electronic implements and other percussion devices. But of the three players, it's Schlippenbach who generates the most prodigious gravity, quickly drawing Parker away from the sputtering form normally encouraged by the presence of Lytton into some quite strategically gorgeous jazz. Lytton is also seduced into working delicately poised, super-light patterns around little riffs of time. But Schlippenbach is equally responsive to Lytton's more subtle formulations, evolving repeating designs into minimal tattoos that embroider Lytton's surface work on the drum skins. Even Schlippenbach's solo feature seems infected by the drummer's constant imitation of biological rhythms, as the pianist employs sharp percussive jabs as if to separate and call attention to individual arcs of melody.

"When I play solo I tend to start from a particular idea, or a certain point," Schlippenbach explains. "Maybe I'll start off working from something as simple as slow, fast or big steps or maybe just small movements. At other times I might try to relate to what I'm playing as if it was in the context of a composition. However, when I play free improvisations with other players I try to avoid falling back on any preconceived patterns or ideas whatsoever and simply focus on moment-to-moment gestures. At times like that I feel like I'm putting a lot of myself into the music and using it as some kind of vehicle for self-expression. This is especially true when I'm playing with Evan and Paul [Lovens] in a jazz club where there's more space for that kind of expression as opposed to the context of, say, a Zimmermann composition, where I try to keep myself a little more out of it."

Looking back on the 2003 *American tour*, Schlippenbach clearly enjoyed the experience, but some jazz habits die hard. "It was just great," he beams. "I've toured all of my life but I still enjoy it when I'm with the right people. Touring America was particularly enjoyable as I actually got to see some of the country as well, but I have to say, the American non-smoking obsession is a real drag."

Though Schlippenbach turned 67 last month, he's showing few signs of slowing down. Besides a live staging of Monk's *Casino* at Amsterdam's Bimhuis, he has plans for a series of live solo performances and a new solo album for Intakt, as well as an appearance from Globe Unity Orchestra at Lisbon's Jazz em Agosto festival and a trio tour of Japan with Aki Takase and Oji Wibe. And although he feels that the new music scene is as healthy as it's ever been in terms of audience interest, he still mourns the colonisation of jazz by large corporate interests. "30 or 40 years ago it felt like musicians had really changed something, so much so that they had even managed to take it over in terms of the business of recording and releasing their own records," he concludes. "But these days it seems that this ethos has been abandoned and once more the whole process is in the hands of big business. Yet today we have a hundred times more live improvised music than we ever had before. The interest is definitely increasing. Maybe we're feeling the first stirrings of a reaction on the part of ambitious young people who have finally had too much of 'industrial comfort' music. I only hope so." □ Monk's *Casino* is out now on Intakt



Rockaway beach

They're scattered all over the globe, in Berlin, Los Angeles, Prague and Oxford; Steve Albini is their producer and biggest fan; they've competed against everything from casual sexism to the sounds of an American military train, and have played with everyone from Dutch anarcho punks The Ex to a Chicago a cappella choir. Welcome to the surprising world of Electrelane.

Words: David Stubbs. Photos: Jake Walters





There's a track on Electrelaine's new album, *Axes*, entitled "Gone Carier," which epitomises both their primal, mounting rock 'n' roll intensity and their confounding, lateral leaps of imagination. Weaving in and out of the on-the-spot riffing is a recording they made of a slow train in Tucson, Arizona. Guitanist Mia Clarke recalls the birth of the notion: "We were playing a show there and the back door was open, because the venue was so hot, and this train was passing right by. And, of course, it takes about 15 minutes to pass through – all in the middle of our set."

"We had the basis of the song but this was what it needed," adds vocalist/multi-instrumentalist Verity Susman. "As it happens, it was the line they were using to transport the warheads and military equipment to Iraq. Not that that was specifically why we used it..."

The effect is simple, deceptively obvious, but an ingenious use of one of rock 'n' roll's prime drivers, the locomotive, that has out a swathe from "Mystery Train" through to "Trans-Europe Express" and all points beyond. As the train approaches, heralded by repeated, long, mournful Moxon blasts, you're almost inclined to dive out of the way, like 19th century cinema audiences faced with the Lumière Brothers' *Arrival Of The Train At Clichet*, fearful that the train is going to roll right out of the sound system and over you. "It does feel like quite an obvious thing because that's the way most rock songs build, intensely, then go away," says Susman. It's a principle Electrelaine takes to runaway extremes.

"The intention was to abandon anything that sounded like a winning formula," explains drummer Emma Gaze, in whose bedroom Electrelaine were formed in 1998. She's jellified, having flown in earlier that day from Los Angeles, but shows little sign of it. If anything, she's the most talkative of the four, one of many indicators that Electrelaine aren't configured according to the usual hierarchical conventions of indie rock. Drummers aren't supposed to be this upfront in interviews. "Just for our own sake, for our own personal interest, we need to push in different directions," she continues. "We're not the sort of band that is striving for absolute perfection in any particular form. We need to push things on. And while that might sound really obvious, there really aren't many groups who think like that, or if they do, put it into practice."

This evening, we're arranged around two low tables in the top room of a Thai restaurant in Brighton, sitting cross-legged on cushioned armchairs and recliners, this writer fighting a constant and losing battle against pins and needles. Brighton is where Electrelaine were founded in 1998, a product of the afterbuzz of Britpop, though that was the last sort of music they ever wished to play. However, in a radical bid to shed any of the stifling parochialism that traditionally characterises and inhibits so many UK guitar groups, three of Electrelaine's four members live abroad – only recent addition, bassist Ros Murray, lives in the UK, in Oxford. Susman, the most musically proficient of the group, is now based in Berlin, having recently completed a philosophy degree course at Cambridge.

Emma Gaze lives in LA, where her partner is based. "People have this image of LA being utterly devoid of culture but it really isn't – you just have to know where to look," she says. "The British do like to look down on Americans as completely dumb and – all right, I

know I'm talking about the coasts here – but they have an amazing college radio scene in America that's way more advanced than anything in the UK, there's no equivalent in Britain. Electrelaine are taken way more seriously in the US. In Britain, we actually still get idiots shouting, 'Get your tits out!' No one would dare to say that in America."

Mia Clarke, meanwhile, is based in Prague, solely to concentrate on writing – for The Wire, among other things. She knows nobody in the city and says that she is able to go three or four days without meeting anybody. "We've all felt a need to get out of Brighton for a long while," she explains. "It would have been bad for us all to be here when we didn't want to be."

"We'd have actually moved away sooner if it hadn't been for Electrelaine," adds Gaze. "And you do come back recharged, more excited, and everyone's been soaking up different things. It means that when we go back and write together in the studio, ideas come unfurled. We're quiet for a minute, then someone says, 'Shall we play?' and someone starts, and everyone joins in and it happens."

As a consequence of their penchant for lurching passages of neo-Krautrock, Susman's occasional, deadpan vocals and simply the female components of both groups, Electrelaine are frequently compared, to their perennial annoyance, to Stereolab. The comparison, however, is a thoroughly superficial one. From their 2002 debut album *Rock It To The Moon* onward, they've exhibited a singular capacity for instant changes of musical scenery, as if prompted by some collective, internal signal. One minute, they're bowling along in homage to Neu!s "E-Musik," the next, they've paused, as on *Rock It To The Moon*'s "Blue Stragler," to take in some sort of Gothic wind tunnel. Then they'll snap out of it and spring off again at full motorik pelt, only for the lights to go out, as on "Long Dark," on which, temporarily, they seem to have become disconnected from each other, instruments calling out to each other tentatively, as if lost in the woods. It sounds like early Pink Floyd drained of all acid. It's one thing for groups to take on board influences, add them to the general stew of their sound, quite another to undertake the sort of wholesale transformations wrought by Electrelaine.

Released on their own Let's Rock! label, *Rock It To The Moon* was a quite storming debut, extraordinary for the youthfulness of its creators. Its cover, depicting a carousel steeple in the grimy sepia of a dismal British seaside setting, only added to the group's cryptic allure. The scratchy, sped-up, heavily treated voices of "The Invisible Dog" intimated that here was a group to perturb us with their presence, their attitude ingrained in the warp of their music rather than any shouty, polemical lyrics – the album was mostly instrumental, a wordless, "silent treatment" of sorts.

On the excellent "I Want To Be The President" (on the follow-up EP of the same name), they began to experiment with vocals, and murmured lyrics like "My tank is faster than yours" were a rare display of political concerns. Then came 2003's *The Power Out*, which I felt at the time was marred by over-emphasis on vocals, played to a weakness. In retrospect, it's a stronger album than I gave it credit for when I reviewed it in *The Wire* 235: its multilingual lyrics, for example, add further to its range of influences, where English was inadequate. And it's no surprise that the new *Axes* is their most assured and accomplished release to date.

Accomplishment/anti-accomplishment, tuition and intuition have played off like yin and yang since Electrelaine's beginnings, personified by Gaze and Susman. "I've had piano lessons since I was five," says Susman. "But in many ways, with Electrelaine, I've been trying to 'unlearn' some of the things that I've learned. At the same time, I feel that a musical training has been really useful. It's a case of finding the balance." Which is what I kind of wish maybe I'd carried on with the drum lessons I took in my mid-teens," chips in Gaze. "For me, it was the excitement of making music, rather than for Verity, who's been playing instruments since she was a child."

Overall, however, Electrelaine's first steps at activity were a triumph of enthusiasm over virtuosity. "We were excited and excitable," conours Gaze. "We were young enough to think, first of all that everything is cool but also to try absolutely anything. Some of the first incarnations of Electrelaine were absolutely hilarious. Not so much thrash as in thrash Metal but thrashy as in a bit chaotic. Thrashing around. But we always had very definite ideas about what we wanted to do with the band and we always took it very seriously."

So much so that, having experienced quickfire, successive epiphanies when exposed first to Quickspace Supersport and then Broadcast, they purchased a Farfisa organ and formed their own label. Members drifted in and out – bassist Rachel Daley was replaced last year by Ros Murray, while original guitarist Debbie Ball left to make way for Mia Clarke, a writer and friend of the group who had been contributing pieces to local newspapers since she was 15. Fired up by a Fugazi gig, she had bought a guitar that for a while sat unplayed, like a rash souvenir. Moreover, an aversion to playing other people's songs meant her practice came at a slow pace. But when she came to audition for Electrelaine, Gaze and Susman were impressed by her cool. "We'd had this other girl audition," says Gaze. "And she was technically better than Mia but there was something a bit cold and sick about her style. Then in walks Mia and she sits on the sofa and starts playing. It wasn't just the really instinctive way in which she played – sitting down like that seemed to show real confidence, in someone so young."

It later emerged, however, that Clarke had sat through her audition for a very simple reason: having only ever practised guitar in the sedentary position in her bedroom, she had yet to master the art of playing the instrument and standing up at the same time. "I was mortified," recalls Clarke, of the audition, but hastily learned to assume the biped guitar stance. In their early days, Electrelaine were subject to the routine, institutional seasm of the gig circuit, with sound engineers asking them if they'd plugged in their instruments, and so forth. That has died away, but the all-female-ness of the group hasn't quite disappeared as an issue the way it ought to have. Press and profiles frequently see them referred to as an "all-girl" group: in past interviews, they've made an issue of it themselves, stating the importance of Electrelaine consisting entirely of women. However, this is something they no longer espouse. "I mean, on the first album, some of the basslines were written by a guy who was in the band early on, and those songs are still ones we feel comfortable with," says Susman. "So the idea that having a man in the band would somehow change the musical dynamic is quite wrong."





Keeping Electrelane all women for now is a convenience thing, as much as anything. It's cheaper, for a start, when you're touring. And it's probably the same for gay bands. Musically, it's not an issue. Certainly not in terms of the groups we feel closest to — like The Ex, for example."

Warning to the theme, Gaze adds, "We still get asked, 'Would you ever consider having a male member in the band?' And our response is, why don't you go and ask The Strokes whether they'd ever consider having a woman band member? Of course, no one would even think of asking that. That's how dumb the question is. Then, you're supposed to measure yourself against other women bands. So we're asked about what we make of Sleater-Kinney. And I answer, 'Fine, don't really care about them one way or the other, to be honest.'"

"It's dumb when your sex gets confused with the music you're making," reprises Susman. "But of course, there is an issue about how few women bands there are. However, that's a separate issue, a sociological issue."

And yet, in music's far leftfield, women have long achieved parity, not just in terms of quality but in numbers — Ellen Fulman, Juana Molina, Pauline Oliveros, Kali Z Fasteau, Laika, Lela, Anne Gosfield, Kathleen Hanna, Jennifer Herrema, Barbara Morgenstern and Kevin Blechodm spring quickly and randomly to mind. But, on the cusp occupied by Electrelane, within blinking distance of the 'spotlight' of popular music, the involvement of women remains sufficiently uncommon to be a source of remark.

A 'devolution' occurred in the mid-90s, I suggest, in UK culture in particular, with the rise of magazines like *Loud* and *RAW*. Sexism was admitted back into the public discourse under the guise of irony, sustained by inverted comments. Words like 'bird' were all right again. The depressing knock-on effect of this isn't just magazine stunts in which practically every journal is fronted by a female whose assertive gaze is undermined by her being a stone underweight and bikini-clad. Women have become re-commodified, battles once assumed won are having to be fought all over again. In pop terms, measure 1980's Grace Jones against 2005's Jennifer Lopez. Peripheral as they are to pop, you do sense that Electrelane are as up against it as the Ramones were back in 1979. Which is a little depressing. "Yeah," sighs Gaze. "And if you protest, you're a humourless, soufaced feminist, which is now a dirty word again."

However, Electrelane don't really have much truck with the idea that women bring something different to rock music, alter its shape, add to its lexicon. "I can see that with a group like La Trinité," muses Susman "because feminist politics are quite predominant in their music. But that's a lyrical thing, whereas we don't quite take those explicit lyrical stances." "What it comes down to is, you're making music whether you're black, white, male, female," concludes Gaze. "If those questions are going to be asked, they should be asked of everybody, white men included."

Like *The Power Out*, *Axes* was recorded in Chicago and produced by longtime fan Steve Albini. Whereas Electrelane's previous studio output has been more protracted in its making, the latest album was turned around quite swiftly over Christmas 2004, with the group deciding to record much of the album in 'live' conditions. "For *The Power Out*, Emma was in a

separate room playing drums and the time, we said, we all want to play in one room," says Susman. "We wanted to be close to each other and look each other in the eye as we played. Steve Albini was really surprised when we came to him with this idea. He was great with it, and great to work with. A lot people said he never actually met him warned us about him, who he was a misogynist, but we can tell you there isn't a trace of that about him at all." Murray takes up the thread. "At least two songs on the album arose from us starting to play and 'getting it wrong'. With Electrelane, because it is a four-way process, because you don't have one person writing all the songs, you're still less likely to fall into a formulaic approach."

This is the way Electrelane create — through tentative jamming, usually in that recognisable neo-Krautrock style. But then, as Clarke once observed, they love Krautrock because it's a music you can "lose yourself in", and this is what they do, disappear down its latent wormholes, only to emerge somewhere else altogether. As Susman puts it, "Having improvisation as the basis for writing songs is why we end up doing these very different things. It's always a combination of four people's ideas at any one time. It isn't a case of someone coming in and playing three chords and singing their song and everyone playing around that."

From the playfully stopstart guitar gambit of the opening "One Two Three Lots", it's clear that Electrelane have developed a highly evolved musical understanding. Clocking in under two minutes, it's an instrumental object lesson in noise and near silence. This segues into "Bells" (the album is pause-free), which bowls along with aluminum density, making good Kraftwerkian time and rising to a pitch of intensity as Susman hammers feebly at single piano notes à la Jerry Lee Lewis. However, it's those sharp left turns that really make the album — not just the *Arctura* train but the use of the Chicago A Cappella Choir, previously deployed on "The Valleys" on *The Power Out*. "They do everything from jingles to religious gospel music," says Susman. "But they were excited about doing a 'rock' session. They were professional, very concerned that they'd done exactly what we wanted of them. Which is completely the opposite of the way we normally work, but it did fit."

During the 80s in particular there was a tendency for white acts to hire gospel choirs as backup, as if to achieve soul by osmosis, or add a spurious affirmative sheen to their somewhat anaemic offerings. But Electrelane's use of The Chicago Choir is nothing of that sort. The juxtaposition is startling yet absolutely logical, the vocals rearing up unexpectedly, deployed sprightly and astutely rather than ineptly like soulless. It's especially effective on the nine minute paean "Sutcases".

And then there is "Partisans", the French Resistance folk song performed by Leonard Cohen on *Songs From A Room* — "Oh, the wind, the wind is blowing / Through the grasses the wind is blowing / Freedom soon will come." Electrelane yank the song along at punklike speed, lend it a contemporary urgency, all the more exacerbated when they were playing the song live in America, on the eve of the 2004 elections. "It was a way of connecting with people without hectoring," says Susman. "As if to say, 'we know what's going on, we feel the same way as you.'"

"A wink and a nod can be better than a distribe," adds Gaze. Most startling of all, however, and perhaps the sort of thing liable to set traditional

improv practitioners flummox should they get wind of it, is "Business Or Otherwise", a stab at free improv approached with an insouciance that might offend those who believe such experimentalism should not be undertaken lightly. But Electrelane are unapologetic. "It was a case of 'Why not?'. We deliberately didn't practise, and it's not the sort of thing we'd intended to do again," says Susman. Gaze emphasises the playfulness of the enterprise. "We do tend to get labelled or perceived as very serious and so-faced. And we are serious about what we do, it's not a joke. But we are having a laugh, you know."

And yet the principles of improv, the collectivism, the mutual attentiveness and reciprocal generosity, undergird Electrelane's operations. It's one of the reasons why they tend to eschew electronics, go for a range of acoustic instruments, including, on *Axes*, bango and harmonium. "I like the idea of it being a conversation between our instruments, because that's really what we're about," says Verity. "And the silences are often the best things — what seems like an awkward silence, then someone comes in and takes things in another direction."

"There are moments in 'Business Or Otherwise' where things kind of fall together, the beginnings of something," reflects Clarke. "And those moments of falling together can occur when it seems like things are falling apart."

"In Electrelane, listening is important," asserts Gaze. "We are really interested in what each other are playing. It isn't like in other bands, where you sense it's more egotistical, competitive — 'Oh, it's my part now'. There's none of that. We're trying to complement each other rather than trying to drown each other out. I think that's quite rare. I sometimes want my drums turned down — why would I want to hear myself?"

But, for all their experimental digressions, Electrelane are another proposition live, remorseless and superheated, creating a noise and a momentum that seems to come from somewhere above and beyond the four frail, semit bodies onstage. When they supported Albini's Shellac at London's Scala last year, they frankly blew the main act away. "A big factor when we're playing is, if we sense the audience enjoying themselves, it feeds the performance," says Clarke. Susman adds, "And we also try to have it as dark as possible onstage, so that there's less distinction between being onstage and being in the audience, that you're not just there as guitar heroes, that there's this collective energy building up." "Whereas The Ex are the complete opposite," observes Murray. "They want as much light as possible onstage, so that the audience can see precisely what each musician is doing."

The effect of Electrelane live is derisive-like. For all their bizarre tangents and metamorphoses on record, there's a molten, introverted concentration about them onstage, a sense of intuitive, common purpose, which will not be denied, and which isn't merely speculated but ignites something in those in attendance. Live is where Electrelane give of their very molten essence. "The most intense gig we ever played was in Portland, Oregon, which had a lot to do with the air conditioning breaking down," concludes Gaze. "Everyone was feeling the same thing, completely boiling, completely sweating. But that somehow complemented the way we were playing. And yes, it did take people into something like a trance." □ *Axes* is out now on Too Pure

Charts

Playlists from the outer limits

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Cordoned-Off (New One)
Coll
Coll ANG (Threshold House)
Various
Mojave: The Country Grooves From Iran (Sublime)
Frequencies
Wanda Jackson
Frequencies (Capitol)
Kid Carpet
Story Shy New (Tired & Lonesome Recordings)
Out Mud
Put It Away, Put It Away, Put It Away Dad (KOT)
Cross
Do They Owe Us A Living? (Cross Records)
Basement 5
1985-1986 (Island)
Various
Like Nothing You Have Ever Heard Before Vols 1-12 (Madison Twerk)
Scots
Dixie (Reviews box set) (Saratch)
Magazine
Switzerland (Giant) (Nigel)
Last Phases & DJ Mike Smooth
Hurdy Teddies (WWE) (Pete)
Tim Lure' Lee
Bombes Hombres (Tummy Touch)
Slyer
Angel Of Death (Def Jam)
Raymond Scott
Raymond Scott (Shasta Audio)

Compiled by Keith McGill, Tired & Lonesome Recordings, www.tiredandlonesome.com

We welcome charts from record shops, radio shows, clubs, DJs, labels, musicians, readers, etc. Email charts@tired.co.uk

Faraway Swimming Pool 15 Circus Maximus 15

Greg Davis
Joker (Capitol)
Sepe
Opera (Harpis)
Ali Ode
Precious Moments (Soft)
FS Blam
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Collections Of Colonies Of Bees
Fa.Oz (Crisp)
Holmes
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Pour Tel
No More Mosquitoes (Domest)
Fridge
Happiness (Temporary Residence)
Alig
Monsters (Rune Grammofon)
The Books
Lost And Safe (Tonalis)
Boon Hip
Blue-Eyed In The Red Room (Lex)
Readon Anderson
Fading Air (Phyco-Park)
Black Dice
Beaches And Canyons (DFA)
Hon
Lucky Cat (Warr Music)
Goroum
Strings And Drum Machines (Anzibi)

Compiled by Brendan Finney, The Faraway Swimming Pool, KSGA 89.9 FM, Montreal, MT, www.lbgs.org

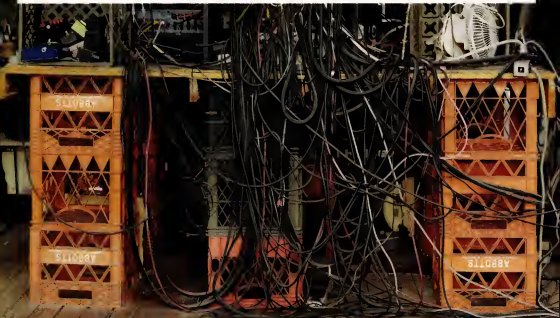
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Lost And Safe (Tonalis)
Marc Leland
Mongrel Pox 3 Feminist Encounters (Oral/Munk)
Günther Müller & Steinbrich
Perspectives (Junt)
Nobody
And Everything Else... (Phug Research)
Verlose
Knapout Vol 2 (Kant)
Bliss
F (Mush)
Deadbeat
New World Observer (Scope)
Fordis
Grounded (Shitstapout)
Blattnum 8
Mashed Fake Plastic (ElleResonance)
Peter Rehberg
Freemason (Moss)
Six Organs Of Adrenalin
School Of The Flower (Drag City)
Berge
I Am 9 (Expanding)
Okapi
Where's The Beef (Infinite Lab)
Timothy 11
Ropey Nervous Habits (Cook Rock Dance)
MIA
Annie (DL)

Compiled by Christophe Tassin, Circus Maximus, JET FM 91.2, Fridays 9-9:30pm

The Office Ambience

Albert Ayler
Live On The Radio (ESP Disk)
The Focus Group
Hay Let Loose Your Love (Sheet Rock)
Ghost
Metamorphose (Drag City)
Verlose
Chorus (Mile, New York 1/1/Brussels 1/1/Brussels)
Zellkrater
Kraft Der Negation (where label)
Smog
A Run Aint Too Much To Love (Domest)
Basil Kirchin
Atmosphere Of The Industrial North (Tusk)
Various
Savits Of Life: Hittan Vedou (Steel Jazz)
The Pedestrian
Unlabeled Songs (Anticon)
Kali Hales
Uche Ni Karamburewa: Waga Nam (PSP)
Pour Tel
Everything Ecstatic (Domest)
Jon Hassell
Maurice Strav (Waga Realism 2) (Label Blue)
Robert Lippok & Barbara Morgensheim
Tess (Monsi)
Theodore
A Summer She Has Never Been, A Winter She Feels (Lo Recordings)
Aswell
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Compiled by The Wire Sound System



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Julian Cowley welcomes the return of Tod Dockstader with the first in a trilogy of new CDs derived from shortwave atmospherics



Surfing the radio waves: Tod Dockstader

TOD DOCKSTADER

AERIAL
SUB ROSA CD

"I was interested in radios – how they worked and magic like that," composer Tod Dockstader told journalist Jason Ankeny in May 2003. That interview is printed in the sleeve notes to the reissue of Dockstader's outstanding 1981 recording of musicless concrete, *Eight Electronic Pieces*. He explains that investigation of the glowing tubes of primitive radio sets, while growing up in Depression-era America, granted him access to a world of electronic revelations. Subsequently he explored that world in far more refined ways, making soundtracks on tape for animated films in California, working as a sound engineer in a New York City studio towards the end of the 1950s and then, during the first half of the 1960s, realising a series of distinctive, idiosyncratic musical compositions.

He was attracted as a child to the sonic dimension of those cumbersome radio wave receivers. "There were a lot of funny sounds in radio that always fascinated me – squeals and peeps and beeps, all kinds of mysteries," he told Ankeny. The vocabulary is indicative.

Dockstader's creative engagement with studio technology has always been suffused with a sense of the magical and mysterious. Envisaging the figure responsible for his music, you are more likely to conjure up the image of an outsider visionary than a white-coated technician. He had no formal musical training, but followed his ear and his instincts to make electronic pieces that sound fresh and alive four decades on.

Dockstader generated his singular 1960s music out of the sound of such sources as gongs, water, human voices, motors, cats, balloons, trains and bells. Then, tired from the physical toil of composing alone with

expensive and labour-intensive equipment, rejected by the academic establishment as a self-taught "primitive" and largely neglected by reviewers and record companies, he retreated from music-making to work at first in industrial design and then for an audio-visual communications company.

The Aerial project is his long overdue return. In the interim his name has resurfaced, in part due to the appreciative efforts of ReR's Chris Cutler, and the importance of his first musical phase has been properly acknowledged in print and through CD reissues. The climate of specifically electronic music production and reception has altered significantly in recent years but this initial instalment of what will be a three volume issue confirms that Dockstader is a major presence in music more generally.

Aerial is quite literally "music with roots in the ether", to borrow the phrase Robert Ashley coined as title for a documentary opera. Dockstader's fascination with radio comes to full fruition in a work of epic scope and character. His raw material is not broadcast matter as such but the atmospheric sound that lies between, the freaks and erratics of the shortwave medium. As he explained to Ankeny, "You tune across and there are really miraculous sounds in the silence." The name Aerial suggests not only the practical hardware of transmission and reception, but also the elemental character of air itself, and maybe even the supernatural spirit figure that Shakespeare located on a sound-haunted island in *The Tempest*.

Back in 1984 Dockstader started to mix material he had gathered from nocturnal trawls of shortwave atmospherics. Prior to this mixing, he had isolated appropriate moments from an extensive store of cassette recordings, transferred them onto 72 reels of tape and 35 DAT tapes, and then descriptively named

and catalogued 90 hours of potentially usable sound. In 2002, he began to edit and enhance his mixes using a computer, selecting the best for inclusion within what has become a long continuous piece, allowing component sounds to determine the overall form. This new music locks the sharp, sometimes jagged articulation and purposefully disjunctive structuring of vintage Dockstader. But then, other priorities are in evidence here. He pointed out to Ankeny that shortwave atmospherics "can sound like cosmic breathing", and in scope and feeling Aerial bears companion with Eliane Radigue's stunning analogue synthesizer compositions *Trilogie De La Mort* (X) and *Adnos* (Table Of The Elements), both works predicated upon an entire cosmology.

Aerial also opens onto vastness, evoking immense spaces and enigmatic events, an out of body travelogue. Those painstakingly selected particles, poached from the airwaves, swirl together to form a pulsating sonic vortex that draws the ear towards some strange remoteness. Dockstader has made it a consistently dramatic experience while preserving mystery through calculated indistinctness and absence of explicit definition. Clear-cut incidents emerge but quickly vanish, ephemera rather than core events; the muted roar of distance persists as the fabric and impetus of the piece. Sub Rosa's decision to issue the three volumes of Aerial separately is tantalising, though undoubtedly based in pragmatic necessity. The first volume arrives in a slipcase designed to house eventually the entire trilogy. The return of Dockstader is something to cherish, not just because his output has been so limited and scarce but because what we do have is so intriguing, persuasive and cliché-free; the music of an inspired explorer who trails in nobody's slipstream. □

**ALVA NOTO +
RYUICHI SAKAMOTO**
RASTER NOTON CD
BY LOUISE GRAY

Continuing in the vein of 2004's *Inzen*, Alva Noto and his latest masterpiece of electronic postmodernism, very much part of the same body of work, Ryuichi Sakamoto's piano notes form not so much fragments of melodies as the thought, or the possibility of them, their potential all the while surrounded by Alva Noto's electronic interventions – electronic fizzes, clicks, dutzet pops. If this album were not so obviously a product of digital technology (and not one premixed on a label created to present new trajectories in electronic music), one would think back to the crackles and creaking of tiny scratches on record surfaces or radio interference.

Certainly the imaginative space created here by the Berlin-based artist Noto (Carsten Nicolai) and Sakamoto – ever enduring, it seems, to his more classical roots – suggests that *Inzen* could be a piece to drift, even as the sounds decay. Its seven tracks move slowly and quietly, the tracks overlapping each other. To risk a quick descriptor, this is a total music of few surprises. If this sounds like darning with faint praise, it's not. The phatic, everyday quality of much of the sound masks an important mode of communication. The cool lucidity at the heart of *Inzen* implies the passage of time, as if the music's purpose was to mark the shift of light and coloration. Indeed, many of the album's titles – "Aurora", "Morning", "Logic Moon" – hint at the importance of time and change here, and the two musicians are alert, with an intensity that is almost Freudian, to the process.

**ANIMAL COLLECTIVE
FEATURING YASHIKI BUNYAN
PROSPECT HUMMER EP**
TAT CAT CD
BY DEREK WALMSLEY

A unifying thread to Animal Collective's diverse output is a return to bygone innocence, whether in chortle-fresh harmonies, rambling campfire acoustic jams, or the wide-eyed wonder of a child's worldview ("Swish! swing a baby"). The Prospect Hummer EP sees their child-like minds meet the wise older hand of Yashiki Bunyan, the recently resurfaced elder statesman of rapy rock. AC's playfulness finds a very special playmate here – the music of Prospect Hummer is simple but carries a profound emotional charge, in contrast to the more whimsical, open-ended sketches of previous work.

With the four (radically different) songs here full of hidden spaces and recurring themes, it seems inconceivable that Prospect Hummer lasts just 15 minutes, as the CD display indicates. This is partially down to the absence of obvious song structure. Chords meander like a lost child, choruses are stumbled across almost accidentally, magically connecting these hesitant moments in Bunyan's soaring, almost wordless vocals. They're hard to sing like I don't know I could," she says. Prospect Hummer is as beautiful yet insubstantial as organum, as if the faltering melodies could have been folded into any number of alternative, elegant forms. The songs fall together and apart as you listen, their transience making them all the more poignant.

**ANTONY AND THE JOHNSONS
I AM A BIRD NOW**
ROUGH TRADE CD
BY MIKE BARNES

Music is often (and justly) described as "starring", but "Hippo There's Someone", which opens this album, is so extraordinarily beautiful, so deeply melancholy that it literally stopped me in my tracks. Standing by the CD player, stockpiled and gawping helplessly, I could have been pushed over as easily as a sleeping cow, had anyone felt so inclined. With cover images of Warhol superstar drag queen Candy Darling on his death bed, and a portrait of a flamboyantly gayed-up Antony Hegarty as a self-styled "utterly genderqueer music sensation", this could have been camp on a Himalayan scale. Its strength is that it's anything but.

On the song – admirably the album's standard – Antony follows a similar path to those bluesmen who get around to pondering their own demise. In the process, he wrenches something from the very core of his being to sing it straight at the listener in that gorgeous, completely individual voice. A female singer friend once mentioned that on his ballads, Jeff Buckley phoned more like a black woman than a white man, and so does Antony. His tenor also has a clematite that evokes David Sylvian and a touch of Bryan Ferry-like verve, but there's a hint of Nina Simone in his phrasing and grace notes as well.

Antony is clearly someone who feels displaced gender-wise, something few of us ever have cause to think about. A song like "For Today I Am A Boy" – where he wistfully he could morph into a beautiful woman – could so easily have descended into bathos, but its beauty is articulated precisely for something beyond hope gives the song its universality. Taking its name from a lyric in Mae Muller's "Disapalida", from the Soft Cell LP *Last Night in Soho*, "Hippa Of Love" works on a number of levels. Undercurrents of SAM and violence can be found there, albeit alongside the same sort of love Wile Dixon was talking about in "Spookit".

This is one of the few songs when the stars are pulled out in a full scale arrangement, horn section and all. The album employs more than 20 musicians and two strong ensembles in total, but they operate in small, neat units or ensembles. It also features a number of cameo appearances by guest vocalists, including Devendra Banhart, Rufus Wainwright, Lou Reed and Boy George (who you might think sounds similar to Antony, at least until you hear them singing together). They all add different vocal colours, but it's Antony's voice that will move you, make you swoon.

**ASIAN DUB FOUNDATION
TANK**
EMI CD
BY DEREK WALMSLEY

With notorious Old School Jungle breaks and anti-apocalyptic rhetoric to the fore the real tank you press play, Asian Dub Foundation's fifth album keeps both in the core values that have defined their career – righteous anger, fearlessly confrontational politics and a brutally direct application of sound system aesthetics. As the album unfolds, however, it becomes clear that while their sonic intensity remains undiluted, that showcases their strengths in a somewhat artificial

manner. With a rabble-raising opener, conscious anti-white Hip-hop jabs and a reflective crescendo at the end, the lyrical content of the tracks can be fairly accurately predicted by where they fall in the album. The conventional broadside of opener *Flow*, a shellshocked howl of defiance, is the most thrilling thing here, but they lose their way in mid-album, with vocally positive messages such as "Get hungry, get angry and take back the power" or "Take Back The Power". And too many decent songs are belabored by enthusiastic but characterless punk/soul guitar riffs on the chorus.

Scratch beneath the patently surface of the album, and there's certainly much to appreciate. Underground Resistance's Mad Mike programs his treacherous electronic textures into "Powerline", and throughout you find cascades of realisms, ferocious percussive deep in the mix, weaving it all overtones of rhythm's melodic possibilities. Although Asian Dub Foundation can still march up jungle, rock and dub to driving effect, on tank the right ingredients are too seldom combined to produce the intended explosive results.

**AXOLOTL
ARCHONS?/ARCHONS!**
COLLECTIVE /RSK CD
BY EDWIN POLUNCEY

Axolotl are an experimental trio made up of Karl Bauer, Brian Tester and William Sebastian, whose self-titled debut was recorded in a bedroom and released on the Psych-O-Path label. Their latest sound venture is a live recording from last summer that has been picked up by cult underground impresarios The Yellow Swans and released in an edition of 100 copies on their CD-R label *Collective /RSK*. Whatever amount of blood, sweat and tears may be spent in trying to track down a copy will be amply rewarded, especially if the ripped electronic howling from groups like Wolf Eyes and Nautical Almanac excites you. That same bleak rock ambience clothes, scrapes and crawls up the walls here in a formless barrage of noise and unwarily, electronically induced weirdness that resonates through the disc's eight pieces.

The spirits of Mike Kelley's *Destroy All Monsters* and early No-Meck Blues (hard blast) through Axolotl's neuroticism (hard), but there is also a more personalised creative force at work, urging them to go beyond the kind of anti-rock experimentation that initially held these two groups together. Axolotl's approach has more rhythmic patterns embedded into the mesh of feedback scuzz and generator rumble, with a distant attempt to force something tangible and even inescapable to emerge from their boiling cauldron of abstract sound scenery. This building up of sound layers – all of which are eventually toppled and reconfigured in a different form – reveals a finely tuned sense of deconstruction, fun-poking artistry that makes their noise entertaining, exciting and engrossing.

**BALANESCU QUARTET
MARIA T**
MUTE CD
BY BRIAN MORTON

This is Alex Balanescu's most ambitious and most satisfying work since his departure from The Arditi Quartet. Following on from his 'terral bridge' meditations on 1994's *Levitation*, he



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The Glass House Trust

has taken a group of songs by the legendary Romanian string star Maria Tănase and shaped them into a rich two-part cycle for his quartet and percussionist Steve Beresford.

Tănase was born in 1913 and died, prematurely, in 1983. I have a little of her music on a Romanian Electrodisc compilation, songs with titles as enigmatically evocative as "Dragi Mi-Si Cantarele Mele" and "Bătrânețe, Rămâne Grele". It's the voice that compels, though, an extraordinarily flexible emotional instrument that conveys lyrical passion and a sadness deeper than oceans within a few measures, excitement and loss in a single phrase. Her mission was to collect folk forms from all over Romania and to present them accessibly and with the emotion intact. Her mission was in some respects similar to Caribou's Songs Of The Avenue, except that Tănase had no desire to make these lost fragments sound "exotic" or contrived. It was closer, perhaps, to Lucian Beldu and Caty Beresford's reading of collective memory for Folk Songs.

There are resemblances between the material I have and some of the pieces composed and arranged by Balanescu, but it's probably best to hear Mono T as a meditation on her work rather than any kind of formal arrangement. Balanescu has shaped a piece of extraordinary beauty that walks all the more powerfully because the human voice is absent. Yet it's implied in every piece here. So, too, is a mysterious physical presence. I'll be astonished if no enterprising choreographer puts in a call and suggests tuning this into a dance work.

At first, Argășiu's presence seems surplus, but when the beats kick in on the long "Empty Space Dance," which seems to echo some of the figures in the opening "Societate," he becomes an integral presence. Balanescu's switch to voice to the same track could have given it a richer and more authentic resonance if he'd thought to double up the lower-toned instrument than simply switching lines with regular violist Andrei Panke. He and his colleagues play with a kind of relaxed rigor. Hard to fault Mono T on any level, except that I suspect the story isn't finished yet.

**PIERRE BOULEZ
LE MARTEAU SANS MAÎTRE**
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON CD
THE THREE PIANO SONATAS
DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON CD
BY PHILIP CLARK

Pierre Boulez's jawy face breaks into a broad grin on the cover of this new recording of his Le Marteau Sans Maître — his most company would like you to think like you in his 80th year; is oddly OK, his demeanor is more sober on the Piano Sonatas disc, but Deutsche Grammophon are doing their best to sweeten what for many listeners remains a bitter pill. One strategy employed is to offset Boulez's own music against his recordings of an increasingly broad range of Romantic repertoire, and these two discs are released simultaneously with new versions of the Bartók piano concertos and Mahler songs Boulez finds himself promoted as a "maestro," but listening to his 1950s modernist pieces like Le Marteau Sans Maître and the Piano Sonatas No 2 highlights that he will always resist such commodification. Even

his Mahler comes with a trademark contrived cut.

As the sleeve-note reminds us, Le Marteau Sans Maître (1953-55) was described by Stockhausen as "the only truly significant work of this new age," and attracted comparable praise from György Ligeti and Theodor Adorno. Le Marteau was written after Boulez's experiments with total serialism in his two piano work Structures (in every parameter of a work controlled by serial methodology), and displays a more intuitive approach to its material. Formally, the piece interlocks three separate cycles of music into one overarching structure. The title and text are borrowed from René Char, and Boulez attempts to define a musical correlation to Char's imagery.

One of the most striking aspects of the piece is Boulez's unusual ensemble — the solo female voice is heard against a backdrop of "Western" sounds from flute and viola, and also of brittle guitar and percussion that recall Asian music and a gamelan orchestra. Boulez confuses the point where text ends and music begins. The voice is heard in its familiar guise as a solo line, but then gets buried deep within the ensemble as the instruments assume a vocal quality. At its conclusion, the voice hovers over the resonant tones of gongs and tam-tams, as though pushing the composer's material to its most poisoned state. It's an iconic moment within avant-garde music, and justifiably so.

Boulez has recorded the work before, but this new version's physical commitment and brusque edge give it a clarity to its labyrinthine structures. The opening is dangerous and fairly demented, where earlier versions have had a bit of girl's blouse quality. Certainly, the gradual winding down of material from the information contained in the opening bars into a sparser, more loosely assembled structure. When he turns up with Sanderson, however, the mood changes dramatically. The title track is a masterful sideling piece for objects and electronics, which hints at spectral composition — a dark, droning glide into the unknown accompanied with the night cries of imaginary creatures, birds, disembodied voices and the pulsating fitting of electronic bass' wings.

**TANIA CHEN &
STEVE BERESFORD
OINTMENT**
ROBBINS PRODUCTION CD

**STEVE BERESFORD
I SHALL BECOME A BAT**
GRIND LP
BY EDWIN POUNCEY

This meeting between accomplished pianist Tania Chen and veteran improviser, musician and composer Steve Beresford unleashes a swarm of strange sounds and fractured

melodies, some of which remain buzzing around in the head long after the album has ground to a halt. Chen plays objects, a screeching violin and piano, while Beresford goes in with more objects, electronics, toys, trumpet and some voice. Recorded by experimental music activist Tim Fietcher at an event organized in South London by Adam and Jonathan Bohman in December 2002, and by Steve Beresford at performances which took place in June and August 2003, Ointment documents the full range of this impressive duo's abilities to shock, surprise and even entertain with the customary squeaks, rattles and groans that manipulating objects to make sounds entails. Beresford's animated arsenal of electronic talking toys, bird calls and frog chorusing adds an element of play into a white knuckle ride that seemingly gets wilder and more out of control. But both Chen and Beresford know exactly what they are doing, even though the end result might surprise them. Although they're occasionally drawn towards practicing improvisational clichés (the chain being shaken about is a work sound being one particularly teeth-piercing example), the majority of the techniques that the duo bounce off each other makes for a spirited, almost soothing listening experience.

Two further Beresford duo performances from 2000 are collected on I Shall Become A Bat, this time with saxophone player John Butcher and fellow improviser Richard Sanderson. Butcher's raucous saxophone blasts are the perfect foil for Beresford's more aggressive electronics, which initially sound off like a broken fire alarm before easing into a more Ambient flow. Meanwhile Butcher continues to bombard with a series of inventive and brilliantly timed horn intonations that bang and buzz like a trapped hornet against the fast frame of noise loosely assembled by Beresford. When he turns up with Sanderson, however, the mood changes dramatically. The title track is a masterful sideling piece for objects and electronics, which hints at spectral composition — a dark, droning glide into the unknown accompanied with the night cries of imaginary creatures, birds, disembodied voices and the pulsating fitting of electronic bass' wings.

**ORI DRUMER
IN THE HEART OF THE DOZING POOL**
DREAMMUSIC CD
BY AM PITCHON

Ori Drumer is one of the most important figures of Israeli underground music, thanks to the group he started in the early 80s, Dunaks Sedek. DS introduced industrial music to Israel's burgeoning club scene. They were also the first Israeli group to adapt the powerful language and aesthetics of punk and industrial to address Israel's political situation. The entry to Parliament in 1984 of Rabbi Meir Kahane, who advocated the forming of a "Bible State" and the deportation by force of the entire Arab population, fueled Dunaks Sedek's apocalyptic rage. Kahane's agenda brought forth, in inverted, convoluted form, memories of Nazi ideology and the Holocaust — one of Drumer's central obsessions.

Dunaks's activity became increasingly sparse, with Drumer himself working more in the fields of theatre, dance and fine art, and taking a teaching position in one of Jerusalem's art



RIC CARPUS specified encounter [Sleep 20]
Enhanced CD contains video recorded from directed, digitally warped & constructed voice sounds, swirling somewhere between Ave Fort and Christian Forast.

The Wax has described her sound as "Gaelic's drone crossing lines flustered over the audience... Gaelic's voice seared up into torn cotton-cotton echoes, snatching the audience with it."

SCUT DE from report
Enhanced CD contains video. This 7th SCUT DE album is a growing chronology of the "scut" club days and microphone made tangibles with a metaphorical but explicit cast, infused with his own original sonic sensibilities (read: grooves). Mastered by Ted R. (Able Master).

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Coming next month

FREE 20 TRACK CD

All copies of next month's June issue of *The Wire* will come with a free 20 track CD, *The Wire Tapper 13*, the latest volume in the magazine's ongoing series of new music compilations.

Beginning in April 1998, and compiled by the magazine's staff, *The Wire Tapper* series functions as an audio accompaniment to the kind of wide-ranging mix of underground and outsider musics that gets featured in the pages of *The Wire* each month, from electronica, avant rock, dub and Hip-Hop to new jazz, improvisation, noise, traditional musics, modern composition and beyond.

As with previous volumes in the series (see page 99 for details), *The Wire Tapper 13* will contain a range of new, rare and unreleased tracks.

The June issue of *The Wire*, complete with *The Wire Tapper 13*, will be on sale from 18 May.
For more information mail subs@thewire.co.uk

schools. This album presents a stunning elaboration on his ongoing themes. A restrained yet evocative soundscapes is built on repetitive phrases of live rock instruments, a driving accordion, field recordings, electronic loops and Dwyer's self-made instrumental, producing sounds out of the flowing, bubbling and dripping of water, called The Virginy Spring.

These songs, along with the looped samples of Israeli folk dances from the 1920s and 30s, form the emotional and conceptual backbone of a requiem for the downfall of the last modernist utopian society in the west. The break of secular, nationalist Zionism from Jewish Diaspora tradition, represented by its most ardent pagan, heretic, Chaitan Hesse-adaptation of the Biblical zodiac (and expressed by immigrants from Russia, Poland and German hijackers of Middle Eastern music) is juxtaposed by Dwyer's alongside echoes of Nazi youth songs and Arabic singing, building an oral tale of Zionism's reformation and tragedy.

ELECTROPOTUS 3

THE SOCIAL REGISTRY CO
BY MARC MASTERS

The loose, jam-drenched rock of Brooklyn trio Electropotus conjures a number of antecedents. The group's electric vocals mimic the frantic wailers of The Boredoms, their angled riffs evoke the aerie tones of Deerhoof, and their slow-grooving structures suggest the drift of Silt and Pezo M. At their best, during the slowed rendition of "Golden Sun" or the noisy bumble of "Profound Root", Electropotus approach the mind-stretching communal jams of The Magic Band and Can, imbued with the wobbly excitement of a group groping (literally) for its roots.

Groping isn't far from stumbling, though, and during semi-funny tracks like "Master Triangle" and "M", Electropotus slide into predictable grooves that veer on the rote exercises of a grade school cover outfit. But such flat stretches are rare. On most of 3, the trio of Joe Finkiel, Jairo Suzuki and Akio Muroto spill their sonic colours outside the lines without meandering into laziness. "International Harvest" opens the album with a deep, echoing cover of vocal fog, while "Stomach" experiments with dramatic piano and sparse, skittery sounds, and "Never Been More In Love" sprinkles noise guitar onto rubbery bass runs, turning a stoner jam into bleeding improvisation. The spare supporting group's rocky musical form is its cloudy enveloping spring. Led by Suzuki's soaring blast, the group's screams and moans waive over the song like a veil of dust, forcing disoriented elements into a massive, rocking whole. At the end of 3, the aptly titled "More" silts the joints of earlier tracks through a thick shroud of static noise. It's a fitting thumbnail for the album's hypnotising entrapment: simple grooves skittered in creative chaos.

FANTOMAS SUSPENDED ANIMATION

IFPGAC CD
BY MIKE BARNES

This CD is subtitled 3D Miniature Holidays In 43 Minutes. And if that implies that Paton and friends cover some ground, just listen to one of the longer tracks, like the two-minute "4/10/00 SUNDAY". Starting with a treated Speak & Spell

machine, it centres through a myriad sections, from slabs of Speed Metal – such in itself like a melody of Napoleon Death's shorter tracks, tied to a bit – to Paton's vocal outbursts, one of which appears to be his take on Ketak, the Balinese monkey chant. Then more musical toys, a 15-second section that sounds like his old group Farth No More, more Speed Metal sections, more monkey chant, even more toys, then finish. Some of the shorter tracks actually pack even more information into a shorter time.

With this amount of structural detail in the compositions and the speed at which they move – particularly with the smart and dumb elements all clashing together – it begins as quite a thrilling ride. But at this level of concentration, ten minutes feels like an hour; it soon becomes enervating.

Some of the slower sections are quite evocative, yet everything is in danger of being suddenly wiped out with a shock, a howl, sound effects, or a few second burst of dagger sound. Titled, this like a more chopped 'n' condensed version of John Zorn's most aggressive combi: the scaterjag splurges of Yamataka Eye and Otomo Yoshihide in duo format; and Frank Zappa in his like love of novelty sounds, pastiche and cheese. Superficially impressive, it ultimately spirals down through one's mental playhouse leaving little trace of its existence. As its right on impossible to discern any structure from its hundreds of fragmented parts, by the close, *Suspended Animation* will leave all but the most insatiable of shock troops completely glazed over.

HENRY FLYNT PURIFIED BY THE FIRE

LOUSIE CD
BY JULIAN CONWAY

The estimable Dawson Slater of *Loose Music* continues to rectify the long perpetuated death of recorded music by Henry Flynt, who regrettably gave up playing instruments in 1984. Slater's excavation of the Flynt archive has now turned up *Purified By The Fire*, recorded in December 1981. It's a spellbinding 41-minute hillybilly romp, with Flynt playing electric violin and Christer Hennix sounding the tambourine in heretage to a mentor they shared, the great Kitaro singer Pandit Pran Nath. Flynt may be credited with having coined the term "conceptual art", but his music is far more about touching and yearning than it is about schemes and ideas.

Hennix sustains a mesmerising, self-absorbed and absorbing drone; Flynt sings with Country blues inflection through his violin, using an amplifier to skillfully to emulate doleful vocal grain and wail. There are occasional haunting echoes of some passing train's lonesome whistle blowing. As on Flynt's and Hennix's *C-Tune*, but more so, technique is divorced with expression, the feeling his generated the form. The only ready point of reference may be La Monte Young's 1993 release *Just Stomach*, with his Forever Bad Blues Band, a more elaborate and extended but less affecting minimalist blues and drone project. Indian music and blues share a focus in the voice, its communicative situations, its heartfelt lamentations and aspirational surges out of concealed depths. Flynt taps movingly into those same sources and makes an allusive music that is still very much his own. It's good to share it at last.

THE FOCUS GROUP HEY LET LOOSE YOUR LOVE

GHOST BOX CD R
BY MATTHEW INGRAM

You hurriedly grab your Morris Minor Traveller outside your pebbledash bungalow and tear into the lounge bedecked in brown acrylic, feverishly removing the sleeve from the new Focus Group LP carefully lowering the 12 inches of static crackling plastic onto your formica-ed entertainment centre. Its creator, celebrated scene designer Julian House (Stereolab, Broadcast, Pinnal Screams), is an exacting collector of the tainted British pastiche. Obsessed by the twilight world of Diana Dors, Donald Cammell, Joe Meek and Delia Derbyshire, he crafts both exquisite visual collages in thrall to European Modernism (the novel effects from the covers of Penguin books, Letterson and Polish Movie Posters) and divinely wrought soundscapes that hark back to an eternal past.

The 19 instruments on *Hey Let Loose Your Love* are so heavily woven that the fabric that holds them together threatens to disintegrate. Detail isn't oppressive in the least, merely disorientingly delicate. Songs are like topside Victorian automata, instruments misremit in incoherent tension (one of House's stock sources are library records in which instrumental parts for songs are separated individually, tracks he proceeds to reconstruct elliptically) and sequences frequently crumble into soft-edged blues before one's ear. It is almost as if the very action of their exposure is the agent of their collapse. Stronger still, though plainly audible, occasionally the music seems to disappear from earshot, becoming proverbially invisible, sinking into the networked of the unconscious. Recurrent themes serve as misremises luring the listener's attention to the surface.

Piced together from the mustiest samples – children's exercise records, vintage BBC drama, clanky Brit jazz and (most pertinently) library records, this is an archaeology of emotion, a philosophically motivated exploration of the power of not just one's childhood memories, but of the collective unconscious. In the wake of The Focus Group and House's partners Belbury Poly and Eric Zann at ghostbox.co.uk (where the collector's entire output is available), memory is a theatrical portal to the phantasmal kingdom, not a trivial exercise in retro stylings.

FOETUS LOOSE

BRIMMAN CD
BY SAM DAVIES

It's been a while now since Joe Thirlwell settled on Foetus as a stable signifier for his output. His album titles, by contrast, have always been consistent, blunt, visceral and monosyllabic, as if to use more words would risk dilution, compromising the music's confrontational urgency. Starting with *Deaf* in 1981 and including *Ache*, *Hole*, *Nail*, *Rife*, *Gash* and *Boil* along the way, Thirlwell has always made self-avowed the shock aesthetic he shared with Lydia Lunch and film maker Richard Kern on New York's early 80s downtown scene. In this context, *Loose* sounds dangerously soft – "love" reads as a right-angle deparade.

Well, of course it isn't. Some abrasion still rules and Thirlwell's vocals still crop with dread,



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guitarist and working by turns according to his FX whim. Secrets and lies, cancer and subversives iddle the lyrics. Charismatic guitars lurch out to trillish off "Nadain Reverse". But Therville's extraordinarily sophisticated ability to arrange continues to fascinate. Orchestral instrumentation fills this album's spaces: there are fretfelling, searsawing, Bernard Herrmann strings on "Tene Merches Du", apocalyptic tones on "Blessed Evening", harp on "Poreidola", and harpsichord-like arpeggios all over the place. "Mon Agone Dancer" features a brass section spelling like Jacques Berf falling downwards.

An element of such — if not camp — humor also splices the standard industrial mix. "Nadain Reverse" complains that "Eton John's assigning me in song" (and is Eton John also the "saturnic agence" in "Trusty"). "Mon Agone Dancer" roars headily into lounge cobwebs. The knowership of Therville's theft here goes deflates what might otherwise have been pomp and circumstance and, say, the brainy John Barry-esque drama of "Not Adam".

**FRED FRITH
ELEVENTH HOUR**

WRITER & WINTER 2002
BY PHILIP CLARK

"Who's Fred Frith? Well, either play John Cage," reportedly said Auditt Quartet leader Irvine Arditi, in response to an idea from the Bremen Festival that the two should work together. In the event, the work that Frith wrote for trombone and string trio for the 1997 festival, *Irisse Serenity*, artfully played to the Arditi group's strengths, blending knoiced-off center tonality with an intriguing ear for open form structure.

Irisse Serenity is the high point of this largely straining project, documenting Frith's ongoing enthusiasm for the string quartet. His transoms writing in the work, deftly handled by Udo Gronen, makes the movement belch, fart and wach as he twists its gestures into the unlikely structural shapes reflecting his experiences as an improviser. There are also moments of catholic lyrical respite, and Frith obliges the trombone to sit at an oblique nine angle to the more grounded activities of the Quartet. The obvious models for his string quartet writing are the cool objectivity of Feldman and Cage's *String Quartet in Four Parts*. The string quartet often slips the familiarity of common tonal chords but without necessarily employing tradition harmonic flow. The synergy between schied trombone and astringe strings is decentering and changed with suspense.

When Frith started composing for string quartet in 1990 he didn't have much idea of what to do, and this first exercise, *Lelelelele*, is a messy stylistic potpourri of lanky licks, minimalism and chugging Shostakovich meter rhythms. It's no better than a thousand student pieces, and The Arditi's feel uncomfortable wearing Koolhaas' clothes. But post-*Irisse Serenity*, Frith forges a more meaningful relationship. On *Allegory and Fed*, both from 2001, he improvises against the shapes and mood of his written string quartet parts on electric guitar, generating a supple syntax where harmony morphs into noise in the first piece and injecting apocalyptic exclamations into the calm of the second. *Stock Figures*, for two electric guitars (Frith and William Winant), sounds like he is strutting a riff from a Spaghetti Western over a 17 minute span,

creating an imaginary ritual as though from the other side of the mirror. Mauricio Kagel meets Sergio Leone, perhaps?

**GANG GANG DANCE
GOD'S MONEY**

THE SOCIAL REGISTER CO
BY MARC MASTERS

Buttup up from its underground lab, New York's Gang Gang Dance concocted two of 2004's best albums: *Revival Of The Sixties*, eight polyrhythmic jolts that stretch the beat into four dimensions, and *Gang Gang Dance*, two sedating swarms of pulsating cassettes and communal mayhem. Both records mix sonic chemists — Len Bougatsos's sky-burning voice, Brian DeGraw's grating synth, Josh Diamond's deformed guitar and Tim DeWitt's rebounding drums — into new compositions, each fevered kick generating new variables for the group to test.

While these records drew from various sources — studio sessions, live recordings, and practice tapes — *God's Money* is the first GGD album crafted in a single space. It's also the group's most structured work, with many tracks veering toward pop melodies. How GGD have managed to pour their ideas-heavy explorations into stricter moulds (tribal anthems, dance workouts, and new wave-ish synthpop) without losing spontaneity is a dazzling puzzle. While previous GGD records certainly stuck in the brain, the nooching beats, sparkly hooks and soaring lines on *God's Money* infect the entire body. On "Gloria In Babel/Egyptian", Bougatsos's raucous vocals are fired by synth streams, percussion keeps and a glittering bank of noise that turns the toes into a cold mechanical droll. "Egwaar" follows with a staffle of droning keyboards, slinked by beat drums and dubby hooks. As feelings continually escalate, off-kilter rhythms slide around spaced-out rasket, dramatic shifts cut through swirling cassettes, and swelling climaxes melt into constellations of clatter.

Each sound seems to spawn another, as if the group were one big cell dividing and regenerating, but the most stunning single element is Bougatsos's voice. Her lyratic, airy singing steers the group's orchestrated chaos, tying the dis into a singular coherence. Such perfection makes it hard to imagine Gang Gang Dance's next move, but *God's Money* proves their bag of tricks remains bottomless.

**JON HASSELL
MARIFIA STREET (MAGIC
REALISM 2)**

LABEL BLEU CD
BY COULIN BUTTNER

The 68 year old Memphis-born trumpeter Jon Hassell has traced a singular path over the last four decades. A student of both Karlheinz Stockhausen and Pirelli Pirel Nath, he played on the first version of Terry Riley's *In C* and La Monte Young's *Dream House 7817*. Since releasing his debut as leader in 1977 he has worked with Talking Heads, Brian Eno, David Sylvian and David Toop, among others.

The journey to *Marifia Street* from its predecessor *Fascinema* has taken six years — an appreciable interval in which the likes of Nils Petter Mohr, Arve Henniken and Erik Truffaz have forged solo careers influenced by varying degrees both by Hassell's ideas and playing

style, two years before *Fascinema*, the *Verbal Collocation* presented 11 tracks made up entirely of samples of Hassell's best catalogue reconfigured, with the trumpeter's approval, by Peter Freeman, who supplies bass and programming on *Marifia Street*. The outcome was comparable to shifting a Tardis deck, some cards, different outcomes. Although the approach potentially signalled a new level of introspection, a fascination for sampling resonant external sources was already woven into the DNA of Hassell's oeuvre, in the call of night creatures on *Verbal Collocation* or the amalgam of pygmyes, gnomes and ancient 50s orchestrations on 1983's *Aks-Darban-Ja*, the first of his records to be subtitled "Magic Realism".

Marifia Street (Marifia means knowledge or wisdom in Arabic) in part represents a further act of loving sound. Small elements of earlier pieces are intertextually depicted as semi-structural elements or bare shadows. Thus, the edgy rhythm of "The Gods, They Must Be Crazy", from 1994's *Dressing For Pleasure*, intertextually cuts into "New Gods", while "Darban Bridge" reimagines various elements from *Aks-Darban-Ja*. The core thrust of *Marifia Street* at first proves elusive. It would be easy to listen superficially and conclude that this new work merely reshapes old ideas for want of inspiration. Attentive listening, however, reveals a much more subtle undertaking that gradually suffuses the mind like a mixture of scents both familiar and foreign, earthy and delicate. The motifs, or sonic landscapes, from previous recordings seep like spores from the memory, bring the listener into unexpected resonance. They act as shared territory between past and present, and serve to vivify the earlier music. However, most of *Marifia Street* is truly new music that conveys the impression of goodness like a feeling gradually to earth. These layers are fused through with contemporary electronic sounds and occasionally ultra-lysergic heartbreak, yet, firmly located in the middle distance.

Marifia Street is the product of three concert performances and extensive studio reconfiguring that has resulted in a hybrid form more complex than its untested parts might otherwise have offered up. Hassell dedicates the album to the late Matt Kirwan, whose painting *Couffoulin* illustrates the sleeve. Touchingly, the field recording of sheep bells that rounds out "Open Secret (Hina)" was captured on a visit to the painter's Mallorca home. Combined with Hassell's old playing, this evokes images of a prelapsarian idyll. Hassell's own playing throughout is as rich and sensual as ever, his sound floating near and around the music like a gulf stream current or autumnal Svalbard wind. The closing "Open Secret (Mina)" features a duet between Hassell and the Italian trumpeter Paolo Fresu, whose open playing evokes the spirit of Miles Davis. The resulting music is at once eerie and beautiful, backward and forward looking.

**PIERRE HENRY
VOYAGE INITIATIQUE**

PHILIPS CD
BY ROB YOUNG

French novelist/philosopher Michel Leiris coined the phrase *L'Œuvre* fame, or phantom Africa, in the 1930s, chronicling his "surmises"

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ethnography" journeys through the Dakar-Djibouti regions of the sub-Sahara. Astounded by the unfamiliar carved masks, painted bodies and ritual dances he encountered, Laine produced a highly subjective response in his subsequent meditations on cultural difference. In similar vein Pierre Henry's latest music concites composition Voyage Initiatique draws on antique field recordings of rites, rhythms and tribal songs, in a stupor attempt to reconceive an unstained new world of undiscovered and magical ethnographies.

Voyage Initiatique – the title surely implies a maiden voyage as well as the sense of initiation – testifies to Henry's treatment of each new project as virgin territory to be gently explored – or in some cases violated. "Musical yoga of thought," he calls his method: not ethnographic surgery, but a musical language of passages and crossroads, of clearways and byways, of flows and jams. It's called yoga but it's more like tai kwon do – long sequences of slow, tense adaption of postures punctuated by sudden sharp releases of energy and force.

The opening "Premier Appentissage" describes a solemn preparation, an adorning, perhaps, with the mental armor required for the coming voyage. Compressed circles code to cracks and whorls, sucked breaths and whistled exhalations, and then the ears are transported across the sea of a part resonating drumhead. "Dusk" samples what could be a Buddhist chant or a central African ritual transfix rite; "Innocence" plays Gregorian likeable drum patterns. "Multiplication" routes us to a field of lowering wood trumpets, looped and interlocked as if braying from the peaks of an infinite mountain range, followed by a caphony of African herdsman and women, dashing metalophones and the occasional bleating goat. "Céleste" provides some recapitulation. Buddhist moans woven into gently swaying columns of bell tones.

The stereotypes by French critics may off-puttingly gneissed before compositional powers perceived as "quasi-magiques", but this is indeed one of the best works by an intrepid sonic explorer whose innovative powers remain undiminished.

JAGA WHAT WE MUST KNOW TUNE CD

BY MARK SWAINES

The Sox, the last album by the Norwegian group feverishly known as Jaga Jazzist, was a dazzling, multifaceted excursion into large ensemble jazz electronics. It carried the lot of musicians who had grown up with programming, striving for that same intimacy and precision in their own playing. Comprising ten multi-instrumentalists, with an eclectic group approach, Jaga are bound to prompt fairly outlandish comparisons. So how about raising the stakes and citing them as the missing link between Soft Machine circa Third and My Bloody Valentine's "Soon"? They certainly haven't done anything quite like this before, and Lars Horneveth and Harald Fekland are playing like a couple of gypsies on a mission. Maybe they skinned their names down as they were loath to charge it to Jaga Rocket?

As ever, record as the above might sound, on "Technological Flow", Lars Horneveth's wisecracks are woven into the complex instrumental themes in a manner that's even reminiscent of

the mixture of formality and lyricism that hallmarkd the compositions of National Health. Delirious brass, piano and tuned percussion mark out initial themes, but the piece becomes massive with guitars and more guitars, a full horn section blazing out of the mix, and Martin Horneveth's outpulsed drumming whipping it up into a massive crescendo.

"Mikado" is arranged with the utmost delicacy, while they actually trace out for a while over the spiking tuned percussion and 4/4 beats of "I Have A Ghost, How What?" before it splinters into an abstract cloud. But best comes first, with the opener "All I Know Is Tonight". Built on a series of intertwining themes, it's a waltztime mini-epic but with a not of musical control, fleetly vocal tracks the big guitar and brass tunes, and these are etched with feeling tuned percussion. A section of muted sax themes of woodwind and brass leads to one final blowout in an arrangement that is simply extraordinary in its scope and invention. And if that's not enough, there is also a bonus CD of works in progress.

JOHANN JOHANNSSON VIROULEQUE FORTSETAR TOUCH CD

BY RICHARD HENDERSON

The most recent effort by Icelandic composer Johann Johannsson, *Virouleque Fortsetar* gives the ostentatious impression of containing few working parts. His previous release for the touch label, the theatrical scores comprising *Englabörn*, was built from working parts designed to render and unmettle. Many of these parts – the Sate memorial plane, a string quartet heartbeats and suspicious by turns, aching need to a vintage beatbox – are eschewed here in favour of 11 horns describing a long chain melody, poised with precise dynamics. *Virouleque Fortsetar* is a single piece, its four movements totalling more than an hour's length, is written in approximate rondo form: beneath and between mutations of the basic theme, link drone passages of enhanced bass contour. A gradual, almost glacial river glides through the mid-section of *Virouleque Fortsetar*; its beats are occasionally doubled with glissandos or tubular bells, recalling Monocane film scores or maybe the poignant single chime note recurring in Anders Borge's *Never Failed Me Yet*.

A few minutes into this experience, it is easy to see these in attendance when *Virouleque Fortsetar* was premiered in Hallgrímskirkja, a church in Reykjavik possessed of unique acoustic character. Johannsson's writing plays to architectural advantage, his brass timbres moving through the building's natural reverberation like ships with well-timed sails taking into the wind. Kudos to Touch for having the consideration to include a DVD audio disc containing a 5.1 mix of the piece; the anamorphic surround-sound format displays to best advantage the space-defining components of this work, which was also recorded in the same church.

According to his notes, Johann Johannsson mulling over a wealth of disparate topics while working on this piece, among them Thomas Pynchon's catalogue of *Sex* disorder, *The Crying Of Our Age*, a New that broods a decade's cultural upheaval and alienation might not appear the obvious match for plain air glances

offered by *Virouleque Fortsetar*'s foreboding melody. However, it is in the deceptively stark portions of this piece that both commonality with Pynchon's concerns and, ultimately, the composer's core intentions are revealed. There is a world of turmoil within the drones linking the rustled bass figures: dark, base-saturated, rattling with orchestrated sparks and glitches and murky control of electronics, they are the sound of compulsion cornered, stuck. In the latter half of the fourth movement the drones fall away, leaving spaces of indeterminacy, aching longings between disappearances of the horn section. This, too, unsettles and the melodic digressions that conclude the piece offer little reassurance. As with Harold Budd, another composer whose best work is often misinterpreted as contemplative, Johannsson excels at painting silver clouds with very dark lines.

MAKOTO KAWABATA INUI 3 VHF CD

BY DAVID KEENEAN

Acid Mothers Temple leader and guitarist Makoto Kawabata formed Inui back in 1999 as a platform for the kind of extended personal drone work that AMT's ferocious, self-gobbling pretty much ruled out. Although it started out as an all-acoustic concern, by the time of *Inui 2*, the spirit had already widened to include various electroacoustic instruments. The latest installation is based around a host of guitar/electronics trance strategies, albeit cut up with a vital slaving film of buzzsaw, snare and viola. The opening track, "Sar", is the standout performance, assembled around a descending three chord pattern that Kawabata picks out on a six string guitar so heavily treated with delay that every note vibrates with a halo of alternatives. Indeed, the combination of both physical and emotional distance implied by Kawabata's beautiful guitar work brings to mind comparative pieces by some of the players to come out of New Zealand's *Flying Nun* scene in the 1980s, specifically The Chills circa *Ralediscap World/Grave Worlds*, as well as the gruffer modal form of Robbie Basho. The sound sources on "Ken" are less immediately identifiable but deep in the heart of this sombre tonal cyclone there's the gnawing sound of a slowly oscillating violin howl. It's the presence of such intricately coded, tactile detail that prevents the whole thing from floating off as a cloud of New Age candy floss. "Kari" also suggests the background presence of countless phantom voices, triggering visions of huge tarantula systems broadcasting the inebriate communications of the dead, or, in slow motion rays from some massive, haunted railway concourse.

Kawabata's interest in the more subliminally evocative aspects of acoustic architecture is something that he shares with New Zealand sound artists Peter Wright and Campbell Keane, the only other players who regularly deliver this kind of mensural deep field drone. The third track, "Faku" (is that a joke?) is also the longest, 47 minutes of electric arpeggio and high peaking tones evoking in barely perceptible movements into a slow burning wreck. It's a great piece of music, with enough upper atmosphere activity to lift you right out of your seat and enough rough-assed zap to prevent your beard from curling.

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NEGATIVLAND NO BUSINESS

BY KEN HOLLINGS

It's a breath mint! No, it's a candy mint! Wheeew, upon both counts: Free world cultural 'Yeabooties Negativland' are back with their latest bag of tricks: an enhanced CD of eight new tracks plus the short video *Genre The Mermaid*, a booklet of evenly angled statements, *Two Relationships To A Culture/ Public Domain*, plus your very own copyright control whoopee cushion (no really, it's true). Such munificence can often hide a lack of clarity or focus in a project, but *No Business* demonstrates this potential spacial with all the neat density of a Dick Van Dyke dance routine.

What you get instead is a carefully controlled spectrum of approaches and perspectives. The midsize studio collages are still very much in evidence. Ethel Mermaid is heard celebrating the joys of smoking on a crosshatched swarming of "There's No Business Like Show Business"; a *Trailblazer* commercial is transformed into a stoner mantra on "Keep Rollin'"; while Jake Andrews seems to have been caught in jolly hallucinogenic downward spiral on a short but heavily reworked version of "Favourite Things", whose lyrical content means "Lucy In The Sky With Diamonds" for damaged psychedelic imagery. Much drier in tone and more measured in their approach, the essays in the accompanying booklet offer fascinating insights into the weird tensions and crises that beset what tends to be called Digital Rights Management in the business sphere. Hiding behind words over the years with the RIAA, PopCo, Beck, Geffen Records, Philip Glass, Fatboy Slim and, most infamously, Island Records (for supposed copyright infringement, trademark infringement, defamation of character and consumer fraud) over their 1991 single "102", which allegedly bore some kind of resemblance to a US spy plane from the 1950s, *Negativland* know whereof they speak.

Caught somewhere between the big yucks and the thoughtful overview are moments of genuine strangeness that are both captivating and unsettling. In the repetitive absurdities of the track "Face A Pie", in which some few lines of dialogue from an understated 1950s radio play are constantly rearranged, gradually take on the slightly eerie melancholy of a late *Chashin* piece; in a somewhat slightly disturbing about the package's elaborate artwork, in which mythical beasts, occult symbols and corporate logos have been cut intricately together. Its underlying message in this age of raping, mashing and burning remains devastatingly clear, however: *Negativland: Now More Than Ever*.

WILLIAM PARKER LUCI'S LANTERN

THIRTY-SEVEN CD

BY BRIAN MORRIS

Best player William Parker reminds me (increasingly) of Ray Brown, the prodigious sideman who steers and counsels any session he's part of but who dominates resoundingly when he's the leader. Not long before his death, I saw Brown run a two date, bawling "My tempo!" over a session one of his talented sidemen tried to reject a variation of pace, and playing pointedly

loud whenever the pianist or drummer upped his dynamics even a notch. Parker is two caposces and gentle as a soul for such things, but his small group work as leader has the same touch of sententiousness. With no horn in the mix — as there was on 1996's *Compassion Seizes Bed-Stuy*, 1998's quintet *Possum Pendemon* or 2000's *Panther's Spring* — there's a palpable slowing as Parker fills his lines with extra information. If Parker really believes that this is the next stage of his creative evolution, he might want to go back and listen to Scott La Faro with Bill Evans at the Village Vanguard. He might even try a couple of Mingus small group recordings. With this instrumentation, mine isn't necessarily less, but more needs to be carefully distributed if it's to be as effective as La Faro was.

Parker En Yamamoto and drummer Michael Thompson seem content to play along. They're less commanding players than Cooper-Moore, Hermeto Dré or Sase Ibama, and often sound as if they're simply following along rather than riding these themes in tandem. There's some lovely stuff on the record. The section that runs from "Evening Star Song" (gargantuan) to the title track, to a heartfelt tribute to the late John Bayard could hardly be bettered, but it's painfully clear by the final cut "Cascades On The Lake" that the music works best when Parker seems inside it.

He phrases like a horn player, with long singing lines. His bow work is still evolving, but hasn't moved on so very much from the two solo CDs *Redemption* and *Living The Sanctions*, the former now more than a decade old. He's still trading in the vein of the much admired Peter Kowald, who was an earnest admirer of Parker's but may wonder now whose some of those dark, purgatory improvisations of former years have led. A beautiful record by any measure, but a bit thin on new insight.

LEE PERRY I AM THE UPSSETTER

TRIUMPH AND

BY STEVE GARDNER

In 1984, just over a year since Lee Perry had destroyed his legendary Black Ark studio, he was sitting in a studio opposite me at BBC Radio Lancashire placing hesitant bet ticks and crosses on the labels of rare 7" pre-release singles of his outpouring passed to him by a Scottish acolyte, the clearly in awe Roger Eagle. The ticks were for those he remembered, the crosses for those he could not recall. Amazing that an immense and ingenious body of genius work was treated so casually by its creator. Some gigantic tunes cut only a few years earlier were apparently just a faded memory.

As with many of his contemporaries in the 60s and early 70s, Perry found an entry to the music business with Client's "Cosmos" Doid at Studio One, becoming a talent scout, arranger and artist. It was there he cut R&B and ska, including the dance single "Clackson Scratch", from which he derived the title in a series of albums. This was also where he met The Wailers, whom he would later steer through their most prolific and exciting period. This fine Trojan four CD retrospective traces Scratch's ten year trajectory following his departure from Beekford Road, starting with his time at Joe Gibbs and the rocksteady of "I Am The Upsetter", followed by the purty proto-reggae of "People Funny Boy". When Perry took control of his own output, chart

success in the UK followed, with skittish favorites such as "Tighten Up" and "Rasta Of Demgo", tunes that assumed a greater importance in Scratch's development for their financial contribution to the creation of the Black Ark in 1973, the most celebrated studio in reggae.

Through this period Perry also went to King Tubby for madsons, an association ungenerously ignored by Scratch when recalling the times, producing a body of work that wasn't only as a prelude to the genre of roots reggae but a template for the gains that became known as dub. Although their 1973 collaboration *Blackboard Jungle* was his first dub set, and only appeared in tiny numbers in Jamaica, its influence was immense. The period 1972 to 1974 would prove a creative milestone for Perry, with ideas flowing so fast they were almost impossible to capture — the catatonic "Babylon Burning" showing Kingston with "blades and fire"; "Better Days" by The Caribans, one of the most beautiful and affecting songs in the whole of reggae; and Othello's "Dub Organiser", a template for the transatlantic export of the great prize song (the prize heaped this time on King Tubby). All this was a mere rehearsal for the densely mystical sounds that Perry would conjure out of the Black Ark with less technology than could be purchased these days for buttons down at Radio Shack. The peak of Scratch's achievements is summarised here on disc three by 15 righteous tunes, culminating in the disco mix of Perry's own "City Too Hot", a song reflecting the unbearably hot, aggravated political atmosphere of Kingston. Disc four tightly packs tribute to his role as sonic innovator with a rundown of dubs and instrumentals.

Rather than attempt any single strained, conceptual angle, Trojan wisely rely on a simple 'genius at work' approach with this compilation. Unfortunately, avoiding the expense of employing a theatre sub editor proves a false economy — none justice should have been done to the excellent contributions of Lee Bel-Brown, Jeremy Collingwood and Chris Lane, all knowledgeable and longtime reggae lovers.

Back to Perry at the radio station in 1984, and best to remember the work he then found it difficult to recall, for the majority of his 20-plus albums since have been so much froth. Like Salvador Dali, his twin as creative madness and artistic cowardice, Perry in his later career lacked the insight to recognise when their foolishness, whether wise or otherwise, crossed the line into tedium. Thankfully, there's none of that here.

RANDOM TOUCH HE YOU TOMORROW

ROADHOUSE PRODUCTIONS CD+DVD

BY KEITH MOLINE

Self-expression and good art are strange bedfellows at the best of times, and the two are barely at the firing stage for the majority of this Illinois duo's latest audiovisual presentation. James Day and Christopher Brown have been making music and films together since the 70s, pursuing an 'art cinema opies' approach to improvisation and production that is sometimes refreshingly artless — in the sense that their work is direct and unperforated — but often just artless.

Low Harrison

May 14, 1917

February 2, 2003

MAY RAIN

May rain falls quietly,
More quietly on the heart
than love's words
Or the peace of love's sleep.

Scented with wet plum
bloom
And singing, May rain
comes down
And none knows how deep

Is the earth's content,
How deep, how deep is
earth's joy in this rain
Down to her deep root,

And the seed is content,
The exploring root,
the bulb slow swelling
And the triumphant shoot.

Low Harrison, 1933

NA015 La Kora Subo
NA055 The Parloos Chupé
NA083 Repazul
NA110 Rhymes With Silver
NA117 Solo Keyboard
NA122 Dime along the Pacific
NA123 Serenada

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Something's a-sneak: Irene Moon

Due to the extreme charm of her recent 7", I went out and bought two more records by Lexington, Kentucky's **Irene Moon**. Excerpts from *Field Station A* (Bogoria Society 10") and *For The Neonate* (Bogoria Society 10") are rife with the weird charm I'd hoped to find. *Field Station* is a reissue of a 1997 record that mostly pairs short etymology lectures with the kind of organ music you can usually only hear in Boyd Rice's ramshackle room. And yeah, it has a sort of cocktail kitsch vibe at times, but its use of the palette is very non-stereotyped. *Neonate* is Irene's most recent work, and includes tracks aided by sound artist Ligo Phonic, the Sick Hour duo, and The Acid Theatre. Each of these pieces has a very different musical flavor—from snuff-as-pus-to-helm-as-toast—but the general aura remains the same: smart and strange and scientific. I am reminded (aesthetically anyway) of the work of the great Monty and the related gaudy of World Immitation Productions. Something is very amiss here. And you have to dig that.

Had the good fortune to pick up a few titles on the Chondritic Sound label at a show the other night. And each one of them is a primary od of ouri jidag. Suppochron Jam (*Chondritic Sound 3" CD*) by **Wooden Ward & The Vanishing Voice** is a five 20 minute chunk of stomp/fuzz/thump psychos laden with flashes of baloon mystery. Although it lacks some of the flesh + density of their recent, most songish material, pure stone flows right out of its heart. The *Blind Destroyer* (*Chondritic Sound 3" CD*) by **Double Leopards** is less dreary and more shrunken than some of their work, but the two pieces here are still lovely—built on repeating waves of sound that enrage themselves as they go along. It alternately sounds like whales gorging or flies feeding on the corpse of an elephant. As always, their work takes you for some trips. Last one up is *Falling Lights Vol. 1* (*Chondritic Sound 3" CD*) by **Comely** from the Hair Police. Unlike his torn throat emanations with that estimable combo, the music he offers here is mellow, lurching instrumental darkness. It's the sound of bees being taken apart (intentionally) by laser beams from outer space, almost like observing 2D minutes of combat descending like rain. And the time you spend listening to it will make you feel

GREAT. So don't be shy, the next time you shop, say, "Chondritic, please."

Yann Neuw is a film maker and sound artist based in Seattle. One of his recent projects was apparently a series of five 3" CDs dedicated to various friends. For whatever reason, only two of them are here. *A Song Of Old Dave Cowie* (*Dragons' Eye 3" CD*) and *A Song For Emma Loeferitz* (*Dragons' Eye 3" CD*). Both are short instrumentals built on electronics and loops. The first sounds like a snake's eye view of some mild electricity being released into a crowd at a hip gallery opening. The second one is more like walling back and forth on a very somnolent diving board while some kids wearing Paul McCartney T-shirts shoot rubber bands at you. We'll just have to imagine what the other friendship CDs might be like. Channed, I'm sure.

The portion of its score that Neway sports isn't huge, but one of the very cool things about it is that many of the important players show up in a variety of settings. It's like there's something in the all-fish diet there that encourages polyandry and something else of the most exemplars of this is **Alexander Rihagga's** *Rooftop Camping* (*Enlightenment 3" CD*). Rihagga plays in the improv group APR, collaborates with people like Jesse Marquis and also produces his own great electronic work. The first two tracks here on this solo disc are about juxtapositions of tones—gentle waves of beguine Driedland torpor collides with bursts of pink noise, then slides back into the ocean to leave how to breathe anew. The third track is a remix by Keith Fullerton Whitman that is far more subtly rounded and glowing than the others, but the combination is fairly ecstatic.

Another example is John Hegie's *A Nice Place To Leave* (*Dawson 3" CD*). Quite different than his work with *Jackhammer*, the abstract pieces here are also studies in extremes. The tonal shifts between meditative and coarsish will make certain small children feel neck strain. But for those with well-developed musculature, this disc is a beaming ride through a dark tube full of surprises.

The prolific proselytizer, Wesale Weather, recently took the time to send along a couple of singles, and both of them are as fine as hell. The first is a split by **XXXXX** and **An Albatross** (*Gold Standard Laboratories 7"*). XXXXX are much less

metaphorically damaged here than they sometimes are. There are all sorts of dynamic smoothers and even quiet patches inside their two tracks to balance out their lightful gushing, and the whole thing really works like a peck mule. An Albatross are a little more formal in their approach, being something of an anti-post-core novelty fusion-disco-space attraction that is sure to wow the more civil part of the college crowd. But no one can touch XXXX. Their helium beats your goose. The other Wesale gift is the soul debut by **Curse Of The Birdmark**, with whom Matt Walter now plays keyboards.

Altus/Cut by **Lowrey** (333 7") is a compressed mass of two standard rock instrumentation (synth, guitar, tube) forced into weird shapes at very high pressure. Everything sounds like it's being shot out of a hose, except for the vocals, which spill off of the record like James Chance's delivery of "Nymphomaniac's Kiss." Wp.

Perhaps I've just been asnooze or something, but it seems like a long while since I held a new record by ex-Swell Map **Jesse Head** (let here I am, in 2005, hands filled by "Merman Blues/Baby Bouncer" (*Dopples 7"*), and it's like he (and/or it) never went away. Since the earliest days of the TVPs, brother Head has seemed determined to take certain Barrett disc attempts into entirely different realms, and so it is here. The A side is a wonderfully soloed chunk of happy psychodelic blues, worthy of The Adoles. The flip is an untidy pastiche of Nick Cave, Patti Smith and Mottley, as imagined by Herb Cohen in 1975.

Seattle's **Popular Shapen** are a very hard-ford punk quartet, whose new release *B-Ball Music* (white Denari/Inferno The Eighties 7") has a very jagged old-timey edge. Hard to not hear the Roll, Nightingales, et al. But things are handled in a distinctly post-core manner, allowing all kinds of frayed styles to loop their dinky shores through the money bars. So there's lots of swank outsider punk moves here.

The Remotes are somewhat avant, but definitely rock oriented group from Germany, who arose from the wet ashes of Mucus 2. Their debut *Transylvanian Dutch/Die Die* (*Gold Standard 7"*) is a good blend of poppy vocals with gentle rockisms that are smeared together in such a way that they transcend cloth. The A side is some sort of narrative about Buddy Holly, heroic

and sharp teeth, but I've been having a hard time making out the details. Suffice to say that I like the part that reminds me of The Silver Apples more than the part that reminds me of Sweet. Very nice recycled DGG pic sleeve, by the way (SC)

Gate 33 is the moniker of Leeds based multimedia artist Eve Khargh. Scribble Season (*Hypnagogia 3" CD*) is her latest offering, nine tense grobbles of sheer art noise samples. At times, as on "Edit, Undo", the sonic assault is more tedious than traumatic, like having your ears syringed with wet gel. But then, the grueling releases and tonnage of "Mans No Exist" breaks through the hassles of your impatience like lava. More fun, however, are those tracks on which Khargh deploys samples, however abruptly cutted. "Ethi Goober" features a cheery flurry of 40s jazz sax that is quite gratuitously marmalised by an ancient blast of dusted-down Gabba, while Khargh continues her pathological grudge against MDR on "Carpe Deere", in which a light entertainment combo are annihilated instantaneously by laboratory-processed volleys of electronics. Most interesting of all is the relatively accessible "Atrophystid", in which Khargh constructs a musical equivalent of the Atomium in Brussels around a taped chat with an astrophysicist, who, when asked how science crosses over into music replies, "It doesn't."

Ashby Nightingales' latest release *To Get Beyond Nothing* By Resonating Combat (*Hypnagogia 3" CD*) is ecstatic, among other things, for its titles, at least one of which literally takes longer to pronounce than does the track itself to listen to—I refer to "Jimmy Gets White In The Face At The Sight Of A Doughnut And Sues Red Wren Driedland A Ham Sandwich." Commencing with "Old Bridge Hands", a call to arms trumpeted through what sounds like an abandoned U-bend, their unwitting lengths of clarity from a left shaft on "The Combat" and the aforementioned "Jimmy" in very quick succession, the title track struts down for ten minutes of wending gyppie strolls and a rusting drone, against the datter and gentle of oblique noises and devices, assembled here as if with the strategy suggested in the title track in mind. [DS] Reviewed by Dyrus Coley and David Shultz



The DVD, which consists of video interpretations of about half of the tracks on the CD, is the more entertaining portion of this release. When they cut their gang-bro excesses and pour down the music and vocals on "Gone Yesterday," the sparse, dense narrative of faking percussion and incoherent muttering sets to simple and striking footage of pulps gathering round a car; they reveal a taste for integrity akin to that of The Residents. Unfortunately, as with a lot of the recent work of the eyeball-headed ones, their deftly set frequently lapses into an unengaging wackiness that is thrown into even sharper relief by the FX-drenched digital collages of their sound. This becomes even more apparent as the CD proceeds, as gloopy, flanged keyboards and over-produced vocals really beginning to grate by the mid-point. On "Puck Your Poxor," they cut down on the ProTools plug-ins and go for something more naked, only to assail the listener with what sounds like Monty Python's Knights who say "Ni" discovering multitasking.

Creative experimentation is a fine thing, but without either meditation by a governing set of principles — the schizoid edge of Zappa or the early Residents, for example — or a sense of genuinely unrestrained expressive energy like, say, Mercurio or Sufjan Infante, Random Walk's good intentions fail to produce much of any interest. Or you and Brown dare you to engage with their weirdness, but don't up the stakes enough to make you feel that you need to bother to do so the challenge.

CURTIS ROADS POINT LINE CLOUD ELECTRONIC MUSIC 1999-2003 ASBMODEL CD

BY KEN HOLLINGS

"Like the quantum world of quarks, leptons, hadrons, gluons and bosons, the microscopic domain remained invisible for centuries," declares composer and Professor of Media Arts and Technology Curtis Roads in his extensive sleeve notes to *Point Line Cloud*. "Recent advances let us probe and manipulate the macro-worldly world." So far, so familiar; the comparison has been around long enough now to elicit exactly a moment's pause. Furthermore, as co-developer of the Cloud Generator and PulseGenerator sound synthesis programs, Professor Roads is better placed than most to make such a connection. Confronted with reproductions of a bubble chamber image showing "the collision of a high-energy neutron particle with the nucleus of a hydrogen atom," repeated throughout *Point Line Cloud*'s artwork like some serious mid-century display, it's worth recalling that the exact relationship between subatomic particles and digital sound remains only that, an analogy.

Having experimented with the digital synthesis of what he categorises as "sound grains" since 1974, Professor Roads brings an attuned ear and a disciplined feel for structure to the tiniest of sound events. His intricately controlled morphing of a Toronto percussion track supplied by John McEneaney in 2000 on "Scalpus" is, for example, especially engaging. If such compositions, along with the restless "Fluxion" or the legendarily and intense "Now," were allowed exclusively to claim the listener's attention, perhaps the question of a specific analogy would form a minor part of any criticism. Instead, the CD comes enhanced with

additional texts and scores, together with a DVD containing visualisations of the principal compositions by Brian O'Reilly, plus the audio strand of a lecture given by Professor Roads at Stanford University in 2004 and an early example of granular synthesis recorded in 1975. Suddenly all the tactile instability of digital sound expressed in the term *granular* suggests an instability of both medium and form. The compositions on *Point Line Cloud* merge into a background made up of texts, images, arguments and propositions. Incapable of feeling long enough to resolve itself, such dramatic data is never complete, it lacks definition in every sense of the word, to borrow another analogy from another professor, in this case Marshall McLuhan, it's entirely possible that we're no longer listening to music on *Point Line Cloud*. We're watching television instead.

PHILIP SAMARTIS & RASMUS B LUNDING TOUCH PARKING SYNTHESIS LP

BY DAN WARRINGTON

Touch Parking is the sequel to *Fluorescent*, recorded in 2000 and released in 2002 on 03 min Records, and once more finds Australian and Danish sound artists Philip Samartus and Rasmus Lunding in wildly creative form. Here, they throw and edit material culled from hours of studio explorations using records, electronics, field recordings and Max/MSP-style electroacoustic improv into four compact, complex, pulsing yet eminently accessible tracks. Both musicians have a background in early 80s punk (Lunding played guitar in the artcore group *Phenac*) and Industrial (Samartus's early work with *Alban Curris* in Gum, recently reissued, included broadcasting remixes of Iggy Pop and Thee Sixties). It shows, not only in Kristian Goodpaster's *Vester's* colorful S&M collage artwork on the picture disc, but in the music's attitude and energy "tripped years and studied beats aside, I don't hear much difference between what we are doing and what was achieved by musicians in the 70s and 80s using whatever means available to shape and render unique some experiences," Samartus comments. So snippets of conversation, Masses of pop music and school chimes and punchy free punk drumming happily coexist with state-of-the-art DSP swoops and seagulls, glitches, switches and high frequencies reminiscent of Samartus's live *Arctact* collaboration with Sachiko M in 24 minutes of colourful, intriguing electronic music. *Vester* should also be credited for the superb material, which involved analogue treatment of the digital source material to reduce transient peaks and narrow the bandwidth without compromising the final mixes of Samartus's belated extreme ragisms.

SCATTER SURPRISING SING STUPENDOUS LOVE PEACOCK KID CD

BY JON DALE

The collective impulse finds much great modern music from the licensed seedlings spring from Finland and Vermont to free jazz's constant stream of precariously assembled trus and caresses. Glasgow's Scatter may have arrived at a group model through jazz, but their music is

open to suggestion and wayward influence. That they had from Glasgow makes perfect sense. As with a loose conglomerate of groups from that city, such as International Airport, Future Pilot AKA and The Bill Wells Octet, Scatter typify a sensibility particular to Glasgow: a cosmopolitan and communicative sound that treats genre with informal reverence.

Where most free music is porton and dogmatic, happy to play to the gallery and perpetuate intricately inscribed dialogues, Scatter effortlessly reconcile freedom and composition. Instead of compromising their output, the group's tactics bolster the character of their aesthetic cross-readings. "National Magic" moves from wacky flutes and a lumbering motorik pulse to a rembetika-inspired melody head, the group looses their instruments in formation. This combination of jazz-derived flexibility and bedeviled traditional music comes on like the Sun Ra Astronauts tackling "The Sun City Girls" classic *Torch Of The Mystics* set. The Sun Ra link is made explicit with a cover of "Adventure-Equation" that's both reverent and playful. "Avarities Of Pasture And Urban Corbanat" invents traditional folk into the group's artistry, showing up a waterlogged and evocative tune through ensemble playing that recalls Ragged Robert's loose, fast backing on Anne Briggs's *Sing A Song For You*. Scatter boss players like the drummer, wussy Alban Tyler on "Orbital," and make like Irish, belligerent bands storming uninvited into "Make The Time".

Rejecting the party lines that dominate improvised music discourse, while simultaneously enlivening their songs by treating them as compliant forms, Scatter's music has a joyous emotional lift that avoids the desiccated clichés restraining so much improvisation and composition.

ALEXANDER VON SCHLIPPENBACH MONK'S CASINO: THE COMPLETE WORKS OF THELONIOUS MONK WINDY JAZZ OR SNAKE MORTON

He's hardly under-exposed, but apart from a few devoted *Musicals* like the late Steve Lacy and Russell Rudin, how many musicians have made a serious and in-depth study of *Thelonious Monk*? And, for that matter, for all the glibness times you've heard "Straight, No Chaser" or "Round About Midnight," how many times have "Galleys Galleys," "Consecutive Seconds," "Humph," "Functional" or "Who Knows" turned up on a set list?

Alexander von Schlippenbach is best known as the leader and mage of the Globe Unity Orchestra, a stalwart of the European free scene. Anyone listening attentively down the years would have recognised a lot of Monk in the mix, sometimes merely borrowed phrases, but just as often unannounced tunes and melodies that always suggested the German had studied the Monk canon with special care. His aim with this project was to make available the whole opus over two or three disc nights, or in a single exertion, as went down on one remarkable occasion at the 2002 Bortol Jazzfest. The music's been done again since then and those recordings date from June 2003 and February 2004.

from Cold Blue

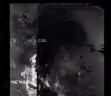
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The Compiler

Various artists: reviewed, rated, reviled

Saying it loud: *Black & Proud*

The German label Ektrek has dwelt why what could be mistaken for morbidity as the African-American tribulations of jazz with the previous compilations as *Down And Out: The Soul Soul Of The Black South*. Now come *Black & Proud Vols 1 & 2* (Ektrek CD), subtitled *The Soul Of The Black Panther Era*. These two discs contain material from the 1960s and '70s. It is some of it under "not angry but enraged," such as Sam Dees's "Heritage Of A Black Man," which starts bitterly down a bleak, minimal bass turnal at the old slave days of the 18th century. Others, such as George Soles on "Get Involved" and Marvin Gaye on "You're The Man," are rather milder pleas against voter apathy, passages of which could easily have been issued by Labour Central Office. And one regards with sideling suspicion the thoughts of James Brown on "Ghetto Reality".

However, spatioptic rage, despondency and a sense of humiliation colour these recordings. Despite the gals of the civil rights movement, *Of Scott-Heron envisages immersion on the inevitable "The Revolution Will Not Be Televised"* (that still to be conceived, but you know what Scott-Heron meant) and The Last Poets foresee worsening conditions on "Panther", conditions that would force people to give "No more [no more/no more dreams/no more heroes]" As it turns out, things didn't come to a head. The lot of African-Americans has improved, just not by very much. Protest has finally faded out, and the sort of lyrics on this collection which dwell on ghetto poverty and the need for revolution are all but extinct from contemporary mainstream R&B, which prefers to dwell in fantasy world recollections of the high life, or hip-hop, which prefers to flaunt proudly riot-gang lyrics, rather than trying to claim for black people the social justice they deserve by right. That said, there are contemporary offerings such as Ophir Jewell's "2000 Years", which attempts to rethink the smouldering spirituality of yesteryear and a last year, while Asan Band Foundation's "Reluctant Warrior" provides a brilliant musical context for Asata Shabaz, a veteran black activist in role in Cuba, striding and showcasing her spoken word piece with the full gamut of their modernized devices. (DS)

The fractured popularity and appreciation of CDs crowd rock legends Black Sabbath is consolidated on the tribute *Everything Comes & Goes* (Bonyon Resonance CD), which gathers together Matmos, Ruins, Go! Go! Go!, Curtis Harvey, Tim, Paul Newman, The Armoirens, Racebent and Greenleaf for a series of "interpretations and mutilations" from the

mighty Sabbath's voluminous song genome. Matmos choose to electronically bend the already experimental "F.Y.K." from Volume 4 even further out of shape, while Japanese group Ruins' "Reverible Sabbath" visually transforms the group's sledge rock beatings into a composition that champions Day and company's shrouded musical desolation. "We hope Sabbath fan will not angry with this song [sic]" they plead as an extension of the title, but surely only the grumpiest Metal purist could take offence at Ruins' heartfelt homage. Elsewhere Paul Newman leads into "Fairies Wear Boots" with a lively version that nods in the direction of Captain Beefheart's Magic Band, while The Armoirens' treatment of "Planet Caravan" is enriched with an atmospheric psychedelic film noir vibe that pulls firmly at the diaphanous sleeves of Quicksilver Messenger Service and "Expressway To Ya Skull" are Sonic Youth. Everything Comes & Goes works best when (like the selection of distorted Sabbath album imagery assembled on the cover) the original songs become only dimly recognizable. (EP)

The same principle can also be applied to *Legacy Of Dissolution* (No Quarter CD/Southern Loud ZXP), in which drone rock maestros Earth are given the remit: treatment by six specialists of the form. Earth acolytes Sane Digg and mastermind Jim D'Onofrio's presence is to be expected and welcomed, but it is a Mogwai's mighty, richly packed interpretation of "Beeth Of Louis Rule The Dunes" (pulled from Earth 2), together with Russell Hovav's Mercurio (disembowelled-by-nose of "Tobacco Quakelets" and Godflesh/Jesu founder Justin Broadbent's shimmering electronic occasion of "Harvey" (both from Phase 3: Thores and Commens), which levitate the collection from being just another feedback-buzzing exercise. (EP)

Spirit: Live In Geneva Cathedral, Saint Pierre (Touch ZXC) especially extends the scope of Touch's previous two CD sets. Spirit: Organ Works Past Present And Future: Philip Jack, Cristian Fomere, Marcus Davidson and BJ (Hazard) Nilson contributed to the earlier release, and on this one they feature entirely new material. The organ is again the locus of activity, either played in the traditional manner or deconstructed in various ways. After Davidson's "Opposites Attract", a much more substantial and attractive piece than it at first appears to be, and his multifaceted *Pushin' For Digger 3*, comes *Albert's Hymne A l'Inconnu*. As with Charles Hess and Bernard Parmigiani, both of whom also chose to tackle a subject only slightly less vast and convoluted than the mind of God, Jewell's

musical language, not though it is, isn't quite up to the task. How could it be? What he presents, and very convincingly, is drumming chaos, amorphous change and glaucous moments of epiphany. It's a piece that in all likelihood would only sound good on the organ, that most majestic of instruments, and the resonant acoustic of Geneva Cathedral serves it well — as, by the way, does Bruno Senab's recording. Lena Alexander's *Consonances* and Henryk Górecki's beautifully made *Kantata For Organ Op 26* and the structural phase of the concert.

Next comes the deconstruction phase. BJ Nilson moved the proceedings for his "Bliss Escapes" to La Petite Chapelle (also known as the Macchabees Chapel), a smaller, less resonant space. His breakdown of units of collapsed consonance into a universal throbbing strips the music down to acoustics, though the coda to his piece suggests that music of a more traditional kind will always remain supreme. This is both confirmed and unconfirmed by Philip Jack's monumental "The Crypt", which contains bombastic power chords (signifying more or less everything but actually nothing in particular) as a ferociously amplified-up electric guitar. Jack's knowing manipulation of social artefacts denies him the freedom of true abstraction — his is always, in some respect, a referential music, one we feel we ought to know but don't know until he presents it to us, at which point it feels utterly familiar. The reconstruction phase is carried by Christian Ferrel's above. His "Moxing" concert in La Macchabees Chapel consists of taped, live hand chanks, distortions, single note, pen-tractions, dissonant pitch-bends, etc. His electronic manipulations extend the reach of the organ in various ways without damaging its fundamental qualities or its status as the king of instruments. As with Jack's piece, music is added that is of value. In this way, tradition is replenished. (RM)

Martin Davidson has been documenting the live music scene in London for much of the last three decades, and his label, Emersan, has a catalogue chock full of what is necessarily coming to be thought of as the traditional strand of free improv (ie played mostly on "proper" instruments rather than laptops, and driven more by technique than technology). He's also one of the protagonists of the annual Festival Freedom Of The City, and *Freedom Of The City 2004: Sweet Emersan* (Emersan ZXC), recorded on a single day in May 2004, is characteristic of what's good about both the festival and Emersan. As well as three imaginative solos from trombonist Paul Rutherford, there are three duos:

Roger Smith (guitar) and Louis Mehlo (drum set and musical doll), Dave Bell (guitar, shakuhachi, pe-saw flute, etc) and Sylvia Hallett (viola, bicycle wheel, saw), Gail Bond (trombone) and Martine Guerberman (voice).

But each of the CDs begins with music by a larger group. A quartet of John Russell (guitar), Stefan Keane (soprano saxophone), Phil Martin (voice), Philipp Wachsmann (violin and electronics) and Gough Wolf (double bass) lock off disc one, and whenever the music threatens to settle for too long in any one place it's often dramatic intervention by John Russell that gets it moving again. The first piece on disc two features a Chris Burn ensemble consisting of John Rutherford (saxophone) and Matt Hutchinson (synths and electronics), plus an Australian contingent of Jim Denley (flutes, flax, alto saxophone, voice), Clare Cooper (guitar) and Will Guthrie (simplified percussion). It is, in the main, an awkward, untidy affair. But during the group's second piece the disparate elements fall neatly into place and the configurations that ensue are highly rewarding. Of the duo sets, Bell and Hallett's is the most wide-ranging and cohesive. There is a folk music outside of tradition, something new and really rather beautiful. (RM)

British out-of-pranksters *Cassebrey* presents a devious eye, which they direct towards the placid language of TV light entertainment. Reassuring studio dialogue and piece-to-piece are out and pasted until they resemble the delirious ravings of a madman. Mick's here (Antidote CD) is presented, logically enough, as a miscellany, with tracks from Bob Deane and Felix Kub peering up between the seats. A BBC Radiophonic Workshop track is, however, not the anticipated masque conceals that their name conjures up, but a ridiculous piece of cast-funeral disco. The focus, then, is on cheery incoherence and in particular the rough and ready sketches, which effortlessly skewer their intended targets. Car aficionado Tim Needell's tedious guidelines on four-wheeled penis extensions are reimagined into advice about acquiring a "cock ho", a chatting pair of gay celebrities interrupt their round with a cosy chat about anal sex. "I wouldn't mind doing it again" — "I wouldn't mind doing that just once", replies his partner. Despite the Parental Advisory sticker on the front of Mick's Box, there's nothing more malicious than Marty Pythons' psychotic grins and gay lumbosacks. Instead the satire is pure incoherent fun — not seeking to undermine culture, just squeaking it until it squeaks a little (DW). *Reviewed by* Brian Marley, Edwin Pouncey, David Stubbs and Derek Whalley



To clinch the rhetorical question above, it might be worth breaking off here, jutting down all the Monk titles you know, and scoring the result like those time-wasting word games in the paper. 30 = novice, 40 = abate; 50 = acolyte; 60+ = about. Anything more than 70 and you'd have to be Theatrical Monk. That's the number Schlippenbach has arranged, sometimes as full-on improvisation grooves like "Bernish Swing" on volume one or "Harnes" I on the second disc, but just as often in miniature form, like the 45-seconds of "Stuffy" kicking in at the first disc, and just shy of a minute's worth of "Reby, My Dear" on the second. As this suggests, the pianist isn't driven by censorious tastes, but not does he seem to be arriving at original turns just because they are, as some have been doing recently "Boo Boo's Birthday," once championed by Kenny Drew Jr. and almost no one else, has become a bit of a cliché "surprise choice."

One can imagine Schlippenbach tackling the whole thing on his own, but the group is integral to the success of the project. Axel Dörner's trumpet sounds completely idiosyncratic, even though Monk always seemed to favor saxophone players. Rudi Mahall's bass clained adds richness of texture and some unexpected sonorities. Jan Roder and Ueli Jönsson complete the line-up. It must have been tempting to drop in some Germans in case interest flagged. There were reports of a lone nodder hell going used for cooking at one of the gigs, but apart from that, and from Schlippenbach and Dörner swapping instruments on "Japanese Folk Song," "Children's Song" and "Blue Monk," and Al Takase guesting on toy piano on "A Menial Christmas," it's done pretty straight and stands up more than fairly. It's worth investing the time to sit down and listen to these straight through. Monk's dissonance isn't frightening any more, but because it's lost its shock impact, we're tended to forget or to overlook just how alienating a wall-to-wall some of these tunes still pack. What's important about this set is that it restores the idea of Monk as a great jazz composer, not just as an eccentric performer who lived off weird solo ideas and sold them like Tesla's wheel has come round again for Trilateralis.

ELLIOTT SHARP RADIO HYPER-YAHOO 2004 CD

BY PHIL ENGLAND

Yahoo: the race of brutes who assume human form in Jonathan Swift's satirical classic *Gulliver's Travels*. Also, the connecting thread in a trilogy of albums by Elliott Sharp that began in 1985 as a response to Ronald Reagan's shaping of America's foreign and domestic policy. The original *The Land Of The Yahoos* was followed in 1990 with *Beyond The Valley Of The Ultra-Yahoos* — marking the reign of George Bush senior.

This latest installment was originally due for release by Gull Music (which has released two Sharp-related albums of late) in September 2004, but the label's marketing campaign, demonstrating corporate America's love of free speech, objected to the record's content on the grounds that it was an "election project" which would be returned by voters within a few weeks. As a result the work has slipped quietly out on Sharp's own xDell label.

Whereas *Beyond The Valley* was principally a

collaboration with singers and instrumentalists, Radio Hyper-Yahoo is more a collaboration with wordsmiths — fiction writers, songwriters, poets and actors. There are a couple of straight readings from essays works of fiction — the unmistakable actor/director Steve Buscemi (*Reservoir Dogs*, *Fargo*, etc.) reads a section from William Burroughs's *The Idiot* that exploded against a cyber-futuristic sonic backdrop. Jack Womack (a favourite cyberpunk writer of Sharp's — he named his blues group *Temple* after Womack's second novel) provides similar bleak cynicism and black humour in a reading from "Heavenly", while Sharp provides a beautifully plummy saxophone and mechanical, droning electronics as a backdrop to tanks rolling down Manhattan's First Avenue.

These three are the most direct and contemporary rap chants. Playwright and stand up Eric Bogosian character-acts a citizen driven to the brink waxing crazily against the clampdown on personal freedoms and the bland consumer trappings which obscure the larger reality. He is accompanied by a brass, bluesy strut with Sam Carr on drums and Sharp's guitar styling like lightning. Performance poet Jesse Morra's political rap on GW Bush's policies takes in the systematic torture at Abu Ghraib, tax breaks for the rich and global warming, against funky drum programming and Sharp's scrawling rock guitar.

Others choose more oblique social commentary. Novelist Maxine Scobie's "Happy" is a quick spurt of ecstatic language couched by frenetic bluesiness on hammered bells; violinist Ester Balliet is stuck in an endless telephone queue with a Tom Waits-like distorted drum programme; vocalist Lisa Lowell sings a Country-flavoured portrayal of rural life with steel guitar over tremolo rhythm guitar chords; and Eddie Torres's poem "King Rat", built up from layers of swampy vocals, could be read as a commentary on America's men in Afghanistan, ex-oil and gas representative Hamid Karzai.

There are a couple of less than crucial performances that have been sensibly shuffled towards the end, but overall this is a timely, inspired and imaginative set, which pushes the boat out while sticking the knife in. And the connecting range of approaches is both testament to the quality of collaborators that Sharp can call on and his current, vertiginous flow.

SHUKAR COLLECTIVE URBAN GYPSY REVENGE CD

BY CLIVE BISH

At the vanishing glories of the British music hall were nearer to us in time, then maybe they'd be hearing spoons songs, musical sores and Cockney singalongs fused with the latest bleeding-edge beats from Hackney. In Romania the past is closer at hand, and so three gypsy musicians who used to work with dancing bears have teamed up with half a dozen young DJs to form the Shukar Collective. And yes, the track "Bar Beat" features a fine spoons solo.

Shukar are Napolean, Tamargo and Clasic, a trio of roaming boys from the villages. Their bears are big, gipsy — these days they sing, scat and rap like the seasoned street performers they are, accompanied by no more than spoons and a banal. This raw, hectic music can be heard as nature in Shukar's Sab Rose album, Bear

Tamers Music (reviewed in *The Wire* 252). The Shukar Collective meanwhile have Napolean's barrel outside the studio door and concertists on Tamargo's soulful wall.

At 62, folk legend Tamargo is by far the senior member, and his overdone, hoarse vocals veer in and out of homage to his hero Louis Armstrong. The younger guys, led by Bucharest studio whizzes Ben Händraru and Cristian Stancu, create dark-lined, sparse dance tracks, often foregrounding the short-up beats of Vlaco Galesa. Vocals are chopped and shuffled into rhythmic chunks, spiced with a pinch of fiddle or cymbalom. Generally this works well. The rising delirium of "Shub" and "Malsomera" is forcefully effective, though "Tara" is a leaden cut-up that never achieves lift-off. Most extreme is "Lautariu", Tamargo scats while a monstrous, one-note bass synth does its utmost to level the building around him. On the opener, "Calling Tamargo", the impressive Napolean harangues a live audience for several minutes, presumably bragging, or possibly proclaiming his delight at not having to lug that barrel around any more. In the sleeve photo the whole Calotzev pose standing precariously in a filthy, horse-drawn farm cart, parked in a sea of Romanian mud. Urban Gypsy is an urban record, but the harsh post and ratal reality never far away.

SIRONE BANG ENSEMBLE CONFIGURATION SILKHEART CD

BY PHIL FREEMAN

Violent, Billy Bragg's work is fundamentally about respect. His music is filled with a mournful dignity that, without ever becoming clichéd or even overt, deepens his work in the blues as much as the eastern influences he absorbed during his time in Vietnam and afterward. So Charles Gayle, who wields his saxophone like a flaming sword of retribution, might seem like an odd choice of partner. But here they both are, supported by bassist Sirone and young drummer Yshawn Sorey, and swinging together with surprising ease and gravity.

Yes, Gayle cuts loose with some humours of blues, but much of the time he sticks to something like song form, more in the spirit of a tired-down later-day album like *Ancient Of Days* than a blow-the-walls-out *Repetit* or *Kingdom Come*. The CD's billing gives it away — Gayle's really a seldom-hear and he settles into that unfamiliar role with surprising ease. Bang and Sirone are the dominant voices, darting and ducking as Sorey's sinister over the cymbals, his touch as delicate as a spider. Sirone's fluid shifts are the secret heart of *Configuration*. He played on Gayle's early Silkheart discs, and knows just how much energy and steadfastness is required to bolster the saxophonist as he strains against giddy's beats.

At the same time, Sirone's able to rein himself in and become a delicate, almost Zenlike partner for Bang, whose scoops and squeaks never lose beatly overboard in favour of expressive free jazz splatters. The pair dance together for long stretches, slipping away all meaning from genre labels as they bounce drums, squeals and muffled shrieks off the walls of their basement room below CBGBs, where this album was recorded. *Configuration* contains three brand new compositions each from both Sirone and Bang. Let's hope they've got enough for a follow-up.

A new record from the master of brightest up and come on the US scene. The Chicago Tribune says "Powerful Virtuosity and razor-sharp playing"

Long before mesh-ups, Carr worked multiple turntables, tape loops, field recordings, and effects into surreal radio

Where poetry becomes song, mantras become mantras, and images float behind your eyelids

the label of the American Composers Forum

The Boomerang

New reissues: rated on the rebound

General award: Sun Ra

Sleeping Beauty (Artland LP) is the third installment in UK label Artland's ongoing **Sun Ra** reissue series dedicated to restoring some of Ra's more eccentric detours into genre, with a particular focus on his more groove-based 70s work. This 1979 release was cut by an augmented Arkestra line-up — as after Decey 21st Century Onwards Arkestra, to give the group its full title — that included electric bass and guitar and that made full use of vocal overdubs and various post-production techniques. Although it originally came out on the Arkestra's own Saturn imprint, it has little of the music's audio vernacular associated with the bulk of that label's presentations. On the contrary, the record is fully glossy and the production works to emphasize Ra's more glacial rhythmic concepts, especially on the first track, "Springtime Again", where a slow drift of brass is matched with some subtle, vaguely melancholy vocals. "Door Of The Cosmos" is less interesting, assembled around one of Ra's clunkier space chants and filled out with some of the group's least distinguished electric jazz, while the finale is taken up with the lengthy title track, a vague electronic funk enlivened by a weird mix of disembodied vocal overdubs. All three tracks feature solo spots from saxophonist John Gilmore, but the use of a synthesizer today never serves to blunt much of the human quality of his playing. And although the packaging looks great, it suffers from a lack of historical fidelity, with a 1979 art set using photographs from 1966 (DK).

The original release of *Not Available* (Ears/Rhino CD) by **The Residents** was, surprisingly, delayed from 1974-76 because of the group's nonsensical Theory of Discourse, which held that the work could only be released once they no longer recalled its existence. Like their jealously guarded anonymity, this is nothing more than cheap marketing. Frankly, the identity of who does the eyeball contacts is of little interest to most listeners. What counts much more is whether *The Residents*' music, steeped of such destruction, stands up to scrutiny. Here's a rule of thumb: the longer the track, the greater the potential for tedium. The quirky, snappy songs on *Dark Star* are a treat. But *Not Available*, an opus of sorts, sequestered, nosing themes, introducing us to characters minus characterisation and commentary without meaning. The tale — of an obscure love triangle — is of absolutely no consequence. On the other hand, many of the subscripts within tracks are as good as anything they've done, and the third track, "Ship-A-Kong Ocean", is a delight from start to finish. If you ignore the so-called plot and take *Not Available* for what it is rather than what it purports to be, much pleasure may be had. (BM)

When **Bushy** released their first album and its successor in 1989 and 1990, the group consisted of David Grubbs and Clark Johnson (late of Squirrel Bait) alongside drummer John McVie. This remastered single CD reissue, collecting *Sing The Troubled Beast* and *Dubio Guapo* (Goth City CD), is sequenced with the later album coming first, but really there's not much to choose between the two, in the sense that the group's sound is consistent throughout. On one level it's pretty straightforward, hardcore-derived material, with lean 'n' mean guitar and barked vocals from Grubbs, with a chunky low end foundation provided by Johnson's bass and McVie's tough but precise drumming. However, beneath the explosive rumbling you can also hear them storming at their genre-defined limitations and, in so doing, hinting at what was to follow. It's often fast and furious but never degenerates into incoherent thrashing — the group material is firm grip as it goes through lightning sine shifts — and there's as much emphasis on texture as structure, with the suppleness of the trio's interaction anticipating the laid-back structures and probing musical curiosity which would come to be broadly labelled post-rock. Following *Sing The Troubled Beast*, Johnson was succeeded by Bundy K Brown on bass, marking another step in the group's stylistic evolution. This eventually culminated in a more radical shift in emphasis, McVie's departure and a new name: *Gastr Del Sol*. (TR)

After meandering about on old rock's lunatic fringe for well over a decade, Connecticut's **Bunny Brains** are the subject of a sprawling retrospective. But the group's (Harrack 4500), exhaustively documenting their output during the 1980s. With four discs' worth of absurdist rants, prankster interludes and extended guitar jams, this is probably all the Bunny Brains you will ever need. On *Seward* and his merry minstrels occupy a murky middle ground between the inapt and the avant garde, with epic, freeform, neo-psychodic, feckless shaming space with aimless doodles and stonal noise bursts. Much of it sounds off the cuff, accidental — a kind of spontaneous, gleeful art rock. Consequently, it's massively uneven in quality, and as likely to alienate as it is to charm. The *Bunny Brains* may have some claim to rock's rock record history (if they cared). The cultural car crash of their music is like a distorted mirror image of a more accessible cellophane. But the delirious humour and blatant diatribes start to wear a bit thin. By the fourth disc, the group's sprawling, detuned guitar assault has become irritating, and the references to pop stars in song titles more frequent (Arista Franklin, Gepeche Mode, The Monkees and Kim Kashkew).

For the curious with enough stamina, a bonus DVD of live performances is also included. (TR)

Sounding like some incredibly stange musical meeting between Oliver Messiaen and Raymond Scott, 60s broadcaster, writer and electronic composer **Jim Fasset's** *Symphony Of The Birds* (EM Recs CD) is a work that could appeal to admirers of early electronic music and cardiologists alike. Recorded in 1960 by Fasset and field recordists Jerry and Norma Shwell, *SOB* is, as its title implies, an arrangement in three parts that attempts to imitate the sound of a symphony orchestra by editing together and manipulating stretches of recorded birding.

"Every sound in this musical composition, every note, chord, background solo, every sound and every combination of sounds was emitted originally from the throats of birds," Fasset informs us in his spoken introduction. Among the birds who contribute to Fasset's symphony are a Carolina chickadee, a Baltimore Oriole, a meadowlark, a fish crow and a hermit thrush. Although it must have sounded futuristic in 1960, some 45 years later *Symphony Of The Birds* is more of a space age take than a landmark of electronic music. Although the concept of the project is impressive — the ridiculous Clangers singalong section during the "Second Movement (Buffs)" for example — the slowed down bird calls on the accompanying "A Revolution In Birdsong Patterns" are more impressive and synthetic. Here, Fasset casts aside the novelty aspect of his fascination with birds to concentrate on the ethereal and beauty of his "feathered friends' natural voices" (EP).

Buffy Sainte-Marie's *An American Music* is a performer who once cloaked herself of Old World melody, protest song, Native American throat singing and auction block blues in a show of occult, psychodelic power. Originally released in 1964, it's *My Way* (Vanguard CD) was her debut album and it combines period piece tunes like the mouth-bait dance form "Drople Creek" with flashes of avant garde drama, beautiful drag ballads and some controversial subject matter.

The opening "Now That The Buffalo's Gone" features bassist Art Davis, a free-playing veteran who has worked with everyone from John Coltrane and Thelma Houston to Bob Dylan and Tikky Maylor, but there's something about Sainte-Marie's earnestly rudimentary acoustic guitar that prevents the performance from fully breaking into flight. Not so with the second track, "The Old Man's Lamentation", a vocal evocation of the traditional "Streets Of Laredo", where Sainte-Marie turns the words inside out in a performance that rivals Diamonds Galax's maledictory gospel readings. "Mayco Sto Hoon" is beautiful cultural osmosis, a Hindu

lamentation reflected through transed American Indian phrasing and the version of "God's Love" included here is the kind of warm blanket of brain-enslaving folk that helped launch Matthew Valentine & Erika Elder's *Medicine Show*. It was the presence of "The Incest Song" that caused controversy at the time, but in retrospect it's actually Sainte-Marie's reading of Blind Willie Johnson's "You've Gotta Need Somebody On Your Board" that makes for the album's most emotionally harrowing moment. While not as fully transcendent as *Luminations*, her inspired 1969 marriage of ritual and electronics, it's *My Way* has a sublime aspect all of its own. (DK)

Stefan Winter's *JMT* label developed a diverse and often impressive catalogue during the 1990s. That's confirmed by a stylish reissue series from his current imprint Winter & Winter. **The Paul Motion** live released *Music* in 1993 (JMT Editions/Writer & Winter CD). Motion, a wonderfully eloquent and catalytic drummer, had formed the inspired alliance with electric guitarist Bill Fissell and tenor saxophonist Joe Lovano back in 1964, and the group's fearless chemistry had reached a state of rare refinement nearly a decade on. Lovano's forthright tone had been combined with melodic suppleness and rhythmic self-reliance. Fissell's idiosyncratically expensive style remained instantly identifiable while making unfurling surprising detours and unexpected turns around Moten's themes. Davey Reidman's robust tenor is heard curiously on a single track, mixing Motion an even more satisfying result. (JC)

In the second half of the 1990s played *Urbaine* (JMT Editions/Writer & Winter CD), a collection of radical revision, notably adapting Moten's music for an ensemble that incorporated DJ Oliver's turntablism. It's good to be reminded how successfully he had led to an unequivocal jazz outfit on his 1992 debut *Sphere Music* (JMT Editions/Writer & Winter CD). Thelma Houston is the implied dedicatee, although Herbie Hancock subtly provides the main stylistic springboard from which Cairne launches his personalised and technically sophisticated approach. A case version, with Don Byner's clatter, of Monk's "Round Midnight" sounds unforgivably fresh, although Cairne's own compositions are sufficiently distinctive and worthwhile without support from such standards. With Ralph Peterson doing sterling work at the kit, Anthony Cox and Kenny Davis shaking bass lines, and with contributions from Gary Thomas on tenor and Graham Haynes on cornet, Sphere Music remains thoughtfully persuasive, without really drifting at what was to follow. (JC/C)

Reviewed by Julian Cowley, David Keenan, Edwin Pountney, Brian Marley and Tom Ridge

SMOG A RIVER AINT TOO MUCH TO LOVE

DOMINO CD
BY NAVE BARNES

"Oh, to live in the country with the chickens/And those other things," intones Bill Callahan on "Running & Loping." And indeed he dwells more than usual on music themes here, channeling upon wiles deep in woods and viewing fields of sleeping dogs and surface pine forests.

Callahan's music has often come tantalizingly close to being accepted by the music mainstream. SMOG albums over the last half dozen years like *Knock Knock, Dongs!* (Cap) and *Sevotion* and the particularly upbeat *Super* all contained enough examples of his melodic nose and idiosyncratic wit to suggest that if he one yearn the breakthrough, then surely the next one would be. *A River Ain't Too Much To Love* finds that line of reasoning curtailed, for the moment at least. This latest portal into the curious world of one of America's most imaginative songwriters finds his music pared night back. Acoustic and woken up from time to time, but most of these songs just feature guitar and occasional drums.

Here Callahan is as witty and laconic as ever. His thoughtfully picked guitar figures — typically involving just a handful of chords — frame his haiku like statements, aphorisms and gnomic utterances, delivered with the musical equivalent of comic timing. Callahan almost always writes in the first person, and although his characters seem pretty much at ease with the world, even when they appear lost within it, they all demonstrate their author's love of obscurity.

The title track "A River Ain't Too Much To Love" features this delectable take on centuries-old folk song from and imagery: "Bury me in water and I will grieve/Bury me in fire and I go to Phoenix." Like some skeletal cowboy tune, "The Well" takes as its main point of reference a dip of water hanging from a well bucket. Callahan's fascination with the everyday reminds here of Bob Dylan's "Clothes Line Saga", itself a hilarious look at the humdrum. But Callahan is a true original and maybe a brilliant misfit. As he says on "Pilestump": "Why's everybody looking at me/Like there's something fundamentally wrong/Like I'm a southern bird/That's stayed north too long?"

THEODORE A SUMMER SHE HAS NEVER BEEN. A WINTER SHE FEARS

LO RECORDINGS CD
BY SUSANNA GLASIER

Greece based Theodore's debut album is part of a wider attempt to temper the portrayal of a hard shiny future with a more "innocent," scathed, folksy sound. Its short vignettes mix studio tinkering with found sound and weatherbeaten instruments. It's a work filled with footings of sweet loss for an imagined magical time when dreams were also hopes. It's beautifully put together, the impressionistic sound of another world caught on the breeze, the ghost of an ancient background coming into focus, then melting away. Gluckespeyer play loop the loop with each other, mediated by a soft synth drone on "Tree Wish." The quietly rippling pulses of noise of "Wind Walk" distill a faint melancholy accord. "Madam Otter" is exquisite, dreamy and surface, as if recorded underwater. The clucking baseline of

"Isobel" creates the album's sole point of urgency, as strings float by like scenery on a lazy train journey. The entire work is dotted with cowbells, submarine pings, microtonal melodies, luzzy layers, glassy rustlings, church bells, grigs and flutes, placed with meticulous postindustrial detail.

In other hands, this might have made for a rather sickly sweet package, but *A Summer* survives repeated listening, maybe because it's stricken with a seam of dark melancholy. It draws less on folkloric's traditional jaunty English feel and more on the cultures of Theodore's homeland, as well as France (Edith Piaf appears on "Montmartre"). Even "Edelweiss" is sampled without irony. The sleeve to *A Summer* contains a quote from Björk, "If there is no soul in computer music: It means nobody put it there." That's one thing Theodore certainly cannot be accused of.

VARIOUS MOLAM: THAI COUNTRY GROOVE FROM ISAN SURINAM FREQUENCIES CD

BY ROB YOUNG

Sovereignty over the region of Isan, sited to the north east of Thailand's snarled swivel of nationhood, has been swapped over the centuries between Thailand and Laos. Unsurprisingly then, its pop music, emanated on this installment of Surinam Frequencies' epic global netting campaign, incorporates generous portions of the fluttering, reed-bamboo mouth organ (khren) peculiar to that part of South East Asia. Its crackled, accordion-like sound is also implicated on spindly electronic organs. This compiler captures a style in transition: steps from the 1970s metamorphosing from acoustic folk into electrified, wired and quirky manifestations. Peculiarly stiff female voices just with wailful males over numbing waterfalls of funk beats; stridently otherworldly creakle while electric guitars marble the meat of the music or strut it with staccato dips like rainfall on a pond.

With its roots in country folk song, themes tend towards the bicyclically celebratory — Sangwan Lalum's "Lam Phun Sangkha Moon Garja" ("Garja Better Than Boze") — or tragic. "Lam Phun Kaeng" might be mistaken for a slow funk rillap cruise, but this is in look though style — a slow lament, in this case for a year of famine. A duet for mouth organ and stargazed song by two nameless duettists displays available virtuosity as the two instruments sludge step in each other's footprints, flattening in each other's space like cooing motifs, and creating acoustically the sound of a skipping CD. Surinam Frequencies have done well to bring the music of this landlocked region into the open air.

VELIOTIS/SUGIMOTO/ KINOSHITA/UNAMI QUARTET

HIBARI CD
BY DAN WAKSBERG

Recorded during cellist Nikos Veliotis's tour of Japan last summer accompanying post-rock troubadour David Grubbs, Quartet documents his meeting with violinist Kazuhide Kinoshita and Takuo Sugimoto and Unami on guitars. Two of the three extended pieces they performed were composed by Sugimoto and Veliotis respectively, and one improvised, though with music as sparse

as this it scarcely makes any difference. What few notes there are in Sugimoto's "Music For 4 Stringed Instruments" seem to exist to frame the ambient noise filtering into Tokyo's Kid Alike Art Hall, and the sounds of distant voices, planes and motorcycles become as significant as the isolated, predominantly plucked tones that Sugimoto's notated score calls for roughly once a minute. Both Sugimoto and Veliotis have performed with, and acknowledge the influence of, Rada Marika, whose description of the improvisation he turned his back on over a decade ago as "stagnant" looks like it's coming back to haunt him. If proof were needed that the lowercase/micro Improv scene Marika helped inspire has itself stagnated, this surely must be it.

Quartet holds few surprises for those already familiar with Sugimoto's recent work, notably his compositions released on A Brut Secret and Backstop-Bay, or with Veliotis's idiosyncratic stringed drums, either in his solo work (*Radial* on Comrade) or in an ensemble setting (Lopez's *Squarehead* on Absent). The only hint of the unforeseen comes in the endematically crackles and crackles of Kinoshita's laptop violin in the concluding improvisation, though it is amusing to try and work out what the two larks are actually up to, until a decidedly answered twang some 17 minutes in provides the answer. It's all a beautiful example of poetic extension — as Harrison Birtwistle once memorably described the late works of Morton Feldman — though it does raise the uncomfortable question as to how many albums of music like this one actually needs.

SUSUMU YOKOTA SYMBOL

LO RECORDINGS CD

BY MARTIN LONGLEY

Yokota is here departing in a very different direction. It's debatable whether it's fruitful. The essential concept is to pursue a melding of classical motifs and electroacoustic looping, and it's a testament to Susumu's skills that it's not always clear where found samples and newly recorded instrumentation begins. But Debussy, Mahler, Ravel, Tchaikovsky and Beethoven are filtered into what ends up being uncomfortably close to New Age music. Purring trained voices wobble and tilt in sliced bites, while orchestral gestures are looped onto creaking, straight time beats.

The mixture of tugged drums and grounded strings sounds clumsy and pompous. These elements are tacked together in a makeshift manner, two halves meeting politely rather than entwining intimately. One of Yokota's better attempts, "Traveler, in the Wandering", revolves around an emphatic loop generated by either acoustic guitar or koto, thrived with strips of hair and flute. "Smile Of Life, Love And Aesthetics" is another strong piece, and it's apparent how these highlights both depend upon central loops of weight and force.

The titles are laughably "poetic." How about "The Plateau Where The Zephyr Of Flora Occupies" or "Fairy Dance Of Twinkle And Shadow"? Meredith Monk provides some of the voices, and she's surely present on "Song Of The Sleeping Forest." As the album progresses, rambles are increasingly present, invoking the spectre of Steve Reich. Several tracks sound like direct pastiches, mimicking the New York composer's methods to a worrying degree. □

Quasimoto

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Avant Rock

Reviewed by David Keenan

BELIEVERS BLONDIAUS APOSTASY CD-R

Resourcefully packaged in an inside-out UPS Global Priority Mail envelope and decorated with gory disarray stamps, the latest home-burned release from the shpest avant garage group in the States coincides with their recent US tour alongside labelmates Magic Markers, which culminated in the Noise Against Fascism event in Washington DC earlier this year. (Beatsaurusaurus broke off with "Rebottomed Highground Band", a primed hijack of "Toy Lady" that couples altered-distorted guitar grut with infectious art brut drums and hysterically affirmative vocals from frontwoman Jesse Swenson. Matt Keeling's portmanteau track opens on "Do You Feel Like Lousme?" is pure Whitehouse circa Total Sex. Drummer Anna Klein takes over vocals for a great, burning version of Jefferson Airplane's "Low Mer" — guitarist John Shaw blows it to threads with extended single-note solos torn from a rage of electricity. The eleven-minute epic allows a number of great gross-out facts for the younger listeners too. They've got all the bases covered, then.

BIRD BLOBS BIRD BLOBS SWEET NOTHINGS CD

This four-piece Australian rock group out some great Birthday Party/Beastiality-style barbed wire guitar, with the threat of early Suicide and a vocal that draws on the swampy stylings of Alan Vega and Lou Luster. Actually, the vocals are the weakest element, a stylized snarl that starts to glue over ten barely distinguishable performances. But the density of the guitars provides most of the focus, bent chickenwire shapes that cross the blunt style of No Wave with degenerate blues and stibby, repeating riffs built around gasoline-swinging hiccupps. "My Last Gold Dollar" lifts lyrics from Dock Boggs, while the opening "Bill" recharges the Scientists' "Davis" with a shot of jagged, angular electricity.

CRAWLSPACE BLIMP MUSIC VOLUME 3 BLIMP MUSIC CD-R

Subverted The Amphibious Anarchy Approaches A Jackal He's Growth, the latest release from the Crawling space of Joe Damiano and underground sine guru Eddie Flowers and portner Greg Hogg is a great formless "art" that showcases various non-invented approaches to the electric guitar. Some tracks here seem to consist solely of guitar/amp feedback loops as ear-buckling as The Velvet Underground's potent "Sister Ray" single guitar-amp booding. Elsewhere the duo's insipid combination of protesting machine noise, construction site percussion and field recordings (bells, jet engines) recalls the subversive pop art strategies of Underground UK acts like The A-Sand and The New Blackheads, even as the structural drift of their guitars forges them to up anchor completely and surrender to the aleatory operations of the voice. Think of them as a post-Morricone howlward droning the sci-fi posturing in return for unrelieved access to internal spacesways and you're halfway there.

FROM QUAGMIRE HABITATS IN THE WOUND VHF CD

Quagmire are an American trio who work slow ebbs of acoustic drone into remnants of folk song that recall some of the finer moves of Mowbray and Black Forest/Black Sea. Singer and guitarist Dorothy Geller plays phantasmic arpeggios across each track with planks of nylon string and a reverb, semi-audible voice of style. The group have connections to Philadelphia-based folk artists like Espers and Sharon Krauss — she appears on a couple of tracks, playing the whistle and clarinet. They're also joined by Espers outfit Helene Espino-Santelon, who cuts luminous shapes into several tracks, and UK avant guard Simon Wickham-Smith who adds some subtle electronic treatments. Geller's timid vocal stylings are a little distracting at first but they effectively bolster the overall translucent, barely-there feel of much of the recording, where the slightest dip of strings reverberates like an explosion in an operating theatre. Although much of *Habitats In The Wound* threatens some leader, vaguely articulated concept, it's still possible to lose yourself in its spectral veils without the slightest need towards a point. Which is a plus.

HIVE MIND SAND BEASTS CHRONIC SOUND/PACIFIC CD

Wolf Eyes' explosive combination of industrial noise, hypnotic rock action and radical DIY spirit has inspired a whole host of circumscribing avant punk outfits and cottage industry scene labels to revive rock and electronics as pure guitar. Alongside Greg Harper of Nautical Almanac's Hensel label, the mysteriously-monikered Gnd of Detroit-based imprint Chronic Sound has released a mountain of deformed electronic sound across a range of beautifully configured non-standard formats like CD-R, cassette and LP. *Hive Mind* is Gnd's solo project, based around accumulating lungs of analogue synth that pulse in speaker-strafing cycles and generate all sorts of hallucinatory audio activity. *Sand Beasts* consists of a single 38 minute track that seems laid workhorses straight into the air, coupling the brain-messaging third ear experiments of composer Marjorie Amacher with the aggression of *Breaking Granite*, as well as the imaginary headspace of Double Loops.

LONG LIVE DEATH BOUND TO THE WHEEL EYES CD

Posibly named after a Sol Invictus song, Baltimore's Long Live Death strike a pose in the accompanying booklet that makes them look like a Special Air Unit on the wicker fringes of the World Serpent back catalogue. Literally they share many of the same Euro-Goth obsessions: personal divinity, blood and semen and veegar, bedot readings of occult/pagan rituals. Their music is as cliché and lacking in anything that passes for elementary dynamics as the prodding, Swin Hassel-victor ballads of wuld-be-Uri-Goths like Death In June. At its best the combination of declaratory vocals, funeral rhythms and slow,

drawing strings recalls superficial elements of Joe Burdholer's early backward recordings, but there are little of the idiosyncrasies of spirit that Burdholer brought to the formula.

MANDOG BIG WEDNESDAY CAPTAIN TRIP CD

Advance word on improving Japanese psych to Mardog had them down as an acid rock group in the vein of the now mythical Les Rakettes D'Orléans. And while they inevitably don't come anywhere close to testing the kind of holes in consensus rock reality that Rakettes did, they have a fairly neat way of waging me and space, mostly based around the extant use of delay. The time-staggered cover sheet of the three players generating self-implicating trails of light effectively allegorizes the temporally delineated nature of the songs within. At points they sound more like Boston avant rockers Gue De Sac than their second album, *I Don't Want To Go To Bed*, with guitarist Keith Mischia working repeated arpeggios into locomotive Glen Jones-styled clusters. The rhythm section is relatively direct, anchoring Mischia's furthest orbits with the kind of organic bass/drums pulse that propelled Dams & Cars. This is a good, if hardly revolutionary, jam band action.

MIRRORS ANOTHER NAIL IN THE REMODELED COFFIN ROR CD

Great upstanding release of the sole album from the reformed line-up of the iconic Cleveland underground group with connections to art/punk acts like the Snyones (Snyones leader Paul Morita plays bass and keyboards), The Pagans, Rocket From The Tomb and The Electric Eels. *Another Nail In The Remodeled Coffin* originally came out in 1989 and immediately disappeared alongside the label that released it. ROR's swarthy update adds 15 bonus tracks drawn from the original recordings and sessions for an abortive follow-up. Mirrors' sound draws on the kind of bruised British Invasion strategies pioneered by the Kinks and Barrett-era Pink Floyd mixed with the fractured psychotropic pop of The Soft Boys and Huxman Black, memorable backbeat hooks and lyrics from vocal/guitarist James Kimek that combine the way a social commentary of Ray Davies with a smartness that of the street wry of Lou Reed. This is literate post-Velvet Underground power pop from a group of players who never stopped believing in the unlimited potential for self expression inherent in three minute song forms. At this stage, that feels like a beautiful concept.

SUNBURNED HAND OF THE MAN NO MAGIC MAN BASTET CD

We've got the closest thing to a high fidelity release here from the confirmed kings of the under-the-counter culture, Sunburned Hand Of The Man. No Magic Man comes courtesy of Arthur magazine's new audio imprint and it

bundles a selection of some of Sanburned's most punishingly rhythmic heart-punctures that Dave there are pieces here that sound like Pete Dinklage Miles Davis cut up with these stilet song and stand-up stoner skills, while others make out like the logical heavy Metal extension of Tony Williams's experiments with electricity as part of lifetime longside guitarist John McLaughlin and organist Larry Young, guitarist Marc Orleans can generate fairly long corncribbes as well as the Magic Bands' Jeff Cotton and, combined with Rob Thomson's bass, the two provide a steamrolling backbone that various drummers — John Mooney, Phil Franklin — work to bolster and underwrite. Much of No Magic Man is possessed of a utterly scotchless analogue bottom end and between tracks there are some wowing cut ups from various found sources that add a wester of mystic shod to the already preciously deuced proceedings.

VALLEY OF THE ASHES VALLEY OF THE ASHES SPIRIT OF ORN CD-R

Valley Of The Ashes are a bag, free-thinking rock group from Louisville, Kentucky, who deal in wild, dizzied extrapolations based on material lifted from countercultural classics like Lou Reed's "Wild Child", David Mead's "Unknown Passage" and Danny Whitten's "I Don't Wanna Talk About It". The group's various cover versions slowly culminate into mindbogglingly stored Velvet Underground/Crazy Horse-style songs, with barely remembered lyrics beamed through a strait-oiled capsule of precision, wile and saggid electric guitar. Their version of Whitten's "I Don't Wanna Talk About It" is especially wailing, with a tender, slow motion aspect that almost sounds like the latest Mazzesone big band of your dreams.

VARO HARDCORE BEACH 7 INCH VINYL RECORDS CD

The three Taiwanese women of Varo make top eleven and guitar heavy soundtrack music for movies that do exist. Many of the tracks take their titles, with degrees varying between facsimile and freestyle, from cult movies. But these are no simple soundtrack covers. They are instead complete improvisations, inspired improvisations and prescriptive re-imagings. We find the screaming wiseness of "Amelie" turned into a measured and crystalline mini-opera. "Memento" is a viciously peered thrashing of guitar and ballet holes through a metal drum machine, with a cathartic male vocal doing it all home. "Virgin Suicide" opens with the muted preening sonority of a high-fatted bass guitar before the tension is snatched up by a minimal piano figure counterpointed by percussive chimes and a probing synth line that owes much to John Carpenter's music. "Easy Rider" becomes reflective and thoughtful, for "The Street" shows its OST over managed. Finally, a quirky kind of punk fennecism is presented in response to Vincent Gallo's curio "Buffalo 66". The disc is like looking at the films through someone else's eyes and they are enriched rather than conflated by all that may be lost in translation. (Nick Southgate) [C]

Critical Beats

Reviewed by Philip Sherburne

ADD NOISE SURFACE NOISE DARSUGAR BEATBOX 12"

While maximalism reigns on German dancefloors, elsewhere there's a resurgence of interest in the finely honed tones of the early minimalism of Detroit producers like Carl Craig, Ritonale and Don Bell. For whatever reason, Iceland seems particularly susceptible to this inclination. Danrocha Costello devoted an entire project, *Coloresense*, to the sound, and now Darsugar's *Surface Noise* — the 12" spinoff of a noise label Darsugar — follows up with a Hermetian soundtrack from newbies Add Noise. Reminiscent of the Rite-giggly brooding of The Netherlands' Neworderism, *Surface Noise* is a roll in the rock tumbler. There can't be more than a dozen elements to the track — a few percussive lines, subaqueous bass, an understated chime or two and a high, insistent ping — but they hang in a precarious balance, cycling wily as though perpetually on the verge of spinning out of phase. Masterfully hypnotic.

CARO THE RETURN OF CARO ORAC CD

Seattle's Drac let's just keep getting better, thanks to the disco revisions of artists like Bruno Mars, Prince and [a]pendix, shuffle, and labelhead Randy Jones's debut as Drac, after his spooky *My Little Pony* single, doesn't disappoint. Minimal Techno underpins it all, but almost by suggestion alone. The music itself is overfilled with piano raves, Tax fleas, black, italo indulgences, and elements of classic New York Garage. Plenty of elements will sound familiar — "See Of Hands" dips its fingers into Arthur Russell, Jones's rhythms could drive any record on Perlon, and his revisitation of disco and contemporary means recalls Muro Area — but Caro doesn't sound like anyone else. His compositions blur the line between tracks and songs, building slowly through meticulous addition, but shaping their hooks so that they sink in deeply in tortuous ways. "Ah, Ah, Ah" practically plays out the artist's "Lurek!" invariant in stereo, morphing from a wide-ranging exercise in randomised notes into a hands-in-the-air piano anthem — and all so

slowly you never notice the muddled festival masses infiltrating the IRCAM studios. "My Little Castle", basking with off-beats and dirtier than a pair of eskapades after Glastonbury, breaks down the current fascination with EDM into a quietly punishing minimal Techno track as good (and as freaky) as anything out there.

CHOK ROCK BIG CITY LOSER WAVE CD

What is it about the French and funk? For several years now, the K-New, as I like to call them — Ark, Nkras, Caliente, Chae and the rest of the Kavit and Circus Company label roster — have been integrating electronic dance music with beats that lush like behemoths in clags — but graceful behemoths. Now Paris's Gael Baillet takes their approach and detests it into a vocabulary of fingerpops and hoagies and eyelashes. Everything about "Give It Up", the 12 minute track that anchors the EP is massive — the stonies, the stomps and the stabs, the hoarse exhortations — but the whole thing ends up being as spry as an abandoned hamster; the dust and crackle in the empty spaces feel like tumbleweeds rolling through a ghost town.

ANDREAS DORAU STRASSE DER TRAUME WAVE 12"

German pop sensation Andreas Dorau, known for his 1982 song "Fred You Cabaret" and 1989's "Girls In Love", returned last year to collaborate with Justin Kibricke for Kompakt Pop, now he and his Cologne buddies are back with a single on Mute, which licensed "Fred" over two decades ago. "Strasse Der Traume" ("Streets Of Dreams"), produced by Dorau and Kibricke, works processed piano arpeggios, a psych-rock rhythm section and haze-dripping congas into a slow, oddly motank figure trailing the hiss of scuffed vinyl. A woman's lifting voice occasionally emerges from the curtain of reprobations; emanating from the back of her throat, it feels like something is always being withheld. Three remixes offer modestly varying takes. Martas Rosknecht adds a punchy electro-pop underpinning; Kibricke's turns the tune into a lost Deschee Mode classic thumping with

octave-jumping arpeggios, and Wesserman (Wolfgang Voigt) pushes the bassline and ride cymbals into the red till the whole thing bleeds sticky-sweet sweat.

LAWRENCE SWAP NONAMUTE 12" LAWRENCE THE NIGHT WILL LAST FOREVER NONAMUTE 12"

Peter Kersten, who records under the understated alias of Lawrence, is Techno's most steadfast romantic. You could tell by his titles alone — *The Absence Of Night*, "Winter Green" and now *The Night Will Last Forever*. Setting most of his music to a quietly thumping 4/4 beat accented with incidental clicks and microsynopses, Kersten favours chiming keyboard melodies and hollow organ tones; his basslines always seem somehow very far away, as though estranged from the rest of the song, but unwilling to sever ties entirely. His approach would come off as sentimental, even maudlin, if he didn't shy away from predictable chord progressions and resolutions. Instead, accidentals intercede and lead the listener down meandering, tangential paths. *The Night Will Last Forever* feels even more redolent than Lawrence's previous albums. Every would-be arthen skip away just when you expect it to turn epic. The *Swap* EP offers two remixes of the album's most cohesive cut, Luciano collaborator Sirens' abstracts all trace of the original melody, concentrating on tightly wound drum patterns while Kersten just toughens up the drums to create a wide-eyed rave-up of surreal proportions.

DAVE MILLER MITCHELLS RACCOLTA BACKGROUND LP

Software is a great demotivator of sound. It can make any two rhythms fit together, reconcile the differences between competing timbres, dig secret tunnels between remote-sealed concert halls and the echoless, silicon desert evoked by computer speakers. Mashup creators have been exploiting all these kinds of unity-in-disjunction for years now — and original plunderphonics

John Oswald for much longer — but Perth, Australia's Dave Miller puts a new spin on the virtual reality of sample based composition, fusing snippets of jazz, minimal Techno's clicks and thumps, and soulless funk into a quiet din that explodes like a chorus of loop grooves. The dusty blue tones of his music draw immediate parallels to Jan Jelinek, whose *Loop Finding Jazz Records* introduced the crackling haze of mid-century jazz to a minimal Techno format. Miller's stratospheric and sunken pianos convey a similarly nostalgic, melancholy vibe, but his rhythms are less rigidly brushed. Rather, the cymbals mark time on their own terms, while stuttering snarelets nod to the digital funk of Broken Beat. But Miller's funk, even when it swings, has far more in common with the German deformation of the word 'radio' — the record of a benign eavesdropper, Mitchell's Raccolla hovers between the frequencies of the dial, keeping tabs on every movement of the amnesiac and broadcasting back its observations in a teasingly reduced language.

SUPERPITCHER TODAY KOMPART CD

Alkei Schufler is Superpitcher, big genius of Kompakt and lover of all things shadow-soaked and wind-kissed. Too often, his CDs are but a producer's staggie between artist albums, but today here so closely to Superpitcher's own production aesthetic that it feels more like a peek into Schufler's sketchbooks. Baglains have mooted the idea of MondoGoth for a year or so now, and Superpitcher's selections are a veritable Primer in Goth-infused minimal Techno, from the theatrical gloom of Psychonauts' "World Keeps Turning" to the pained whispers of Michael Mayer's "Lovebored", remixed here by Closer Music's Matias Aguayo. Under Halcie sweeps away cobwebs with a Switzer-style bassline; Nathan Lane pictures DBX's Acidic minimalism shrouded with icecream and lit by rose windows; and Max Mohr hears piano House anthems echoing through the catacombs. Sebastian Teller's "La Moutonne", offers a 180 degree turn in tempo, downshifting to an antique glide. But its waxy strings and endless sustain fit the beat perfectly. ☐



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Dub

Reviewed by Steve Barker

AFRICAN HEAD CHARGE VISIONS OF PSYCHEDELIC AFRICA BEATNINKONG SOUND CD

Borgo I and a loosely reformed Head Charge re-emerge after a period during which the rest of the world has done its best to catch up. You have to go right back to 1993 for their last Dr-U produced release, the almost crossover in Pursuit Of Shashamane Land, follow up to the groundbreaking Songs Of Di Prose, an album whose samples were largely sourced from Alan Lomax's *Cantometrics* collection. This new set is right back in that territory from the opening "Big Country" onwards, albeit deeper and colder than before. Although one gets the impression that the track "Jufin" was more a product of Shwood and engineer Nick Copleve rather than the more pliant Afrocentric impulses of the labribe Noah, the latter came into full play for the rest of the set, most traditionally on the chants "Run Come See" and its version "Run Come Saw" as well as on "Drumming Is A Language", on which Borgo fulfils his role as adopted master drummer of Ghana. Funkier, jazzier and plainly more accessible than its predecessors, this is probably AHC's best so far.

SAM COOKE CARIBBEAN COOKE 7 STUDIO LP

On this limited edition 7" of mysterious provenance, billed as "His Soul meets His Gods", two a capellas from one of the true originals of smooth 1960s soul are set over Studio One rhythms selected for the job. There's always debate about the ethics of this kind of blend, but what's fun for the performer is truly good for business. "Lost & Loston" is covered over for business, "Lost & Loston" is covered over for business. "Money Generator" by Earl Ryan & The Afrokats — only recently revived in its original version and unusual for a classic Studio One rhythm in that it was never utilised for vocals — unlike the "Party Time" rhythm originally vocalised by The Heptones but here sounding made to measure for Cooke's "Love Me". Faux Studio One approach completes the package but that's where vintage pastiche ends. The vinyl pressing is pristine.

DEADBEAT NEW WORLD OBSERVER -SCAPE CD

From the cool perspective of Canada, Scott Maereth aka Deadbeat seems to be picking up the mantle of calculated outrage once donned by Bryn Jones (aka Muslinguz) so consistently but to little avail in his lifetime. At least that's how it seems on "Aba Ghinbi", where the "New World Observer" seemingly sacrifices his implied detachment with a pointed excerpt from a right wing American radio DJ. Then there's "Little Town Of Bethlehem", where the helplessness of the ordinary Palestinian is laid bare by a woman's simple observation of the daily routine of devastation. Deadbeat's sound is growing closer to Muslinguz's ecosystem of percussion, bass and ambience. Thankfully the import of jazz House singer Athesia fails to dilute these largely contemplative, undulating rhythms and the considerable mood of this fine set.

DUB SYNDICATE STONED IMMACULATE BEATNINKONG SOUND CD

Dr-U Sound have now moved their release programme to Japan while awaiting completion of a UK deal for back catalogue. The good news, however, is that these high end releases come with bonus tracks and original split-off artwork. 1991's *Stoned Immaculate*, its title punkified from the high point of a Jim Morrison "poem", was Dub Syndicate at their best, trademark linking rhythms with the witty and liberal application of well sourced voice samples. These came mainly from old Jamaican singles, plus the harmonies of Akabu, judiciously carried over from Shwood's collaborations with Scratch. Head 15 years on, the rhythms perhaps lack variation in pace and the dubbing isn't as wild as we like to remember. Still, the four bonus tracks included are all dubs, one from Far Is "Wadado", a sequel to "Well Tuned Now" — the only reggae tune I know which takes its title from Shakespeare's Othello.

RICKY RANKING CAN'T TRICK I BANANA LION LP

No disrespect intended to the few who have kept the flag flying for so many years, but how

refreshing to have a new UK label promoted unashamedly as an adventure in modern dub styles. Banana Lion is an import funded by Rodney Smith, aka Roots Manuva. Ricky Ranking is Rod's MC, superior to the South London sound system scene for a number of years. His casual, confident style recalls a younger Junior Delgado. The lively linking rhythm comes in chugging full-on headnod mode with wistfully distant occasional keyboard — no progression, all groove. The minimalist is carried through to "Two Peeces", where Ricky turns to a gruff DJ style sounding like an early Shabba Ranks — no greater compliment. Final track "Rootsman" strips and locks back the rhythm but the moodings on top hark back to Patach Sanders/Lionel Little Smith century as space jazz morphs into space dub.

EARL 'CHINNA' SMITH & IDRENS INN DE YARD HOT CD

'Chinna' Smith is best known as owner of the High Times label and probably the most cultured guitarist from the golden age of roots. It's less well known that he appeared as Earl Rude alongside Horace Andy for one of Keith Hudson's most compelling productions, "Satan Side". That tune is versioned here in a "back a year", chilling acoustic take, an outdoor session in which Chinna is joined by friends, colleagues and his son in what certainly constitutes a brave departure from the signature roots reggae setting. Reminiscent of the late Ben Sherman's original acoustic sessions, for his later Bollywood infused classic "Wincle", it's surprising that there aren't more of these acoustic sets from Jamaica as the island is blessed with so many great singers. Despite the presence of Ras Michael Jnr, Ken Bob and Jah Youth, it's Chinna who impresses with his relaxed, improvised style — never overwrought. The opening track "Horsepower", a pean to de weed, is enough to sedate you into gazing the whole set a listen.

TEMPA ALLSTARS TEMPA ALLSTARS VOL 2 TEMPA 2XLP

Light years on from Tempa's Dubstep outtings and a whole other dimension than Grime, the

stars of those scenes now occupy the vanguard of both head and dance all-comer genres. Kadeb and Daddy G's Hyperdub outtings from last year, "Sign Of The Dub" and "Spit", were not quite the future of dub, but the challenge was out. Here they retreat from the abyss and start on the edge with "Babylon (Dub Mix)" and leave Gentle as to take the blows with the awesome sub-baller "Congo". The whole set fades down the Techno and old two step ramps, the drum 'n' bass and brings forward the dub. E-P, Loesh and Digital Mystic make up the crew in live style — everything that the librett scene wanted and failed to be.

VARIOUS THE SOUND OF DUB: RARE AND SOUNDFUL PEARLS FROM NEW ZEALAND IN DUB (THE GREEN ROOM) ECHO BEACH CD

By all accounts, New Zealand — or Aotearoa, as my Kiwi friends would have it — is the perfect location for dubheads. After all, it's comfortably distant from the busiest centres of the music industry, with the advantage of being a peaceful island that benefits from a temperate climate suitable for growing weed. Which then begs the question: is this the right environment for the creation, rather than the consumption, of high quality dub? Germany's Echo Beach, with as many marketing wheedles as Trojan in the UK, determined to find out with this set — a collaboration with NZ's Loop Records. The album gets into gear with "Speech" by Finch Black, a pleasant tape with a mix from international Dubwise, busily an ex-Thompson Twin. This is followed by another nice tune, and another, before you come to realise that worthy but embarrassingly naive lyrics on top of MDG reggae addms is what much of this amounts to, reaching a dire extreme with Lee Tark's "Wash'd MC" by MC Rasta MP Nantor. Larsons After all this, you find yourself grateful for Joe Duke and DJ Fitzbie, from Fat Freddy's Drop — evidently the best band in the land — and their "Midnight Marauders", borne along on one of those great tanking grooves that feels like it's about to start for four minutes or so but never does. ☐

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Electronica

Reviewed by Keith Moliné

BETA ERKO I'M OK, YOU'RE OK QUEENSLAND CD

A perplexing, infuriating but strangely fascinating collection of digital rhapsodies blown in the direction of the electroacoustic elite, this debut from Australian combo Beta Erko certainly shows they believe in doing their own thing. Robin For and Anthony Patena are syncretic laptopists, but by hooking up with out-there-but-bellied Martin Ng and manic tinkler rapper Vuk Makedoski they push the notion of abstract Hip-hop way further than the most extreme Artois effort. In fact, though his prints are all over the album, Makedoski only occasionally delivers anything approaching a coherent lyric, coming on like Dosson's hyperactive kid brother after a night on the Sunny Delight. For the most part, he favours a babbling meta-language that becomes indistinguishable from the broken splatter of the electronics. It's an interesting nod to mangy freestyle rhymes with improvised DSR, but the quirklet pack so much music movement into the tracks that it all feels a bit like being nudged by a posse of computer geeks. Luckily the 12 minute closing dirge of the tide track allows listeners to let the winds sustained in this recording assuage.

COH 0397 POST-POP MCGO 2XCD

Ken Pavlov's Coh project has been operational for eight years, producing a form of minimalist but certainly not pure electronica that owes almost as much to France as it does to the Sibho scene that is his most obvious inspiration. The disc containing Pavlov's latest work (the 03 part of the album title) is unafraid to cover all points between the vague distortions of its opening few minutes and the bone-deep near-techno of its final track. The fact that the titles range from "Quadrata For Max Email" to "United Smash Hit" gives some idea of Pavlov's disdain for compartmentalisation. Rather worryingly, however, the 97 disc — the first official release of any work he pressed up in an edition of seven for a handful of friends — is absolutely superb, a more cohesive and far superior collection. This is where the name of the project (Coh is Cynic's script means "sleep") makes more sense. It's a deeply hypnotic sequence of pieces, here the patient layering of extreme frequencies around a simple, brilliantly malcontent pulse on "The Opening", to the beautifully pure oscillators of the code to "Fracture".

DOUBLE ADAPTOR LIVE AT THE VILLAGE VANGUARD COLUMBIA CD

Double Adaptor are a Dublin based laptop duo active on the local jazz and improv circuit. The title of the CD is not just an absurd joke: Ray Carroll and Keith D'Brien's music, though often exploring realms of pure outdoor electronica, is steeped in jazz in general and John Coltrane in particular. "Saxophone Colossus" in which they

speer with Boniek Szaniarski on tenor, is explicit in its references to A Love Supreme, while the stately, if slightly chaotic John Carpenter-like central theme of "He Joy" is roughed up by spaying, noisome drums that suggest a virtual Elvin Jones. Not that Live is a glossy, high culture document. D'Brien's Metal guitar rhapsodies lower the tone right, stretched like gum almost to breaking point on "Insulation" and torn into ribbons on "Black St". A number of passages, particularly the lightning fast first half of "EUF3", constitute a clarified form of drum 'n' bass, freed absolutely from its moorings and disappearing off into the ether.

ELECTRONIC MUSIC COMPOSER ABANDON MUSIC PLANET MU CD

This prosaically monickered outfit features Ken Gibson from Eight Fractal Modules working alongside Ian Read. Abandon Music is a superior take from Planet Mu — twisted, if less understating analogue trompe l'oeil effects and wacked out sample interpolations. All your favourite IDM signifiers are present and correct, smoothed into perfect formation by the prodigiously gifted producers. What makes the album stand out, however, are its clutterous excursions. The clever manipulations of time and space on tracks like "Regional Cases" and "Too Many Geings Moving Into The Neighbourhood" contrast well with the full-on delirious mania of "Wretched Ideal", giving the album a tight but expansive structure. The best track is the suspended, beatless "Adoption Of The Blank", a floating soundscape that recalls some of Ken Ishii's early Ambient tracks. Like Ishii, BMC have the rare ability to make essentially static forms sound full of tension and incident. It would be interesting to see them exploring this abstract territory more thoroughly on future releases.

MICK HARRIS HEDNOD SESSIONS HEDNOD ART 2XCD

I never realised that "headnodding" constituted a genre rather than a term of abuse to be levelled at lazy, flat instrumental Hip-hop. The gothic spelling cases, hackles too, along with the fact that there's two hours plus of the stuff to waste through on this CD residue of a series of 12's released five years ago. But Harris has a way of getting under your skin and drawing you in, somehow putting the brakes on your motorbike ride until you find yourself staring blankly at the speakers, slack-jawed and drooling, realising with numbly started that your head has indeed started to nod. Harris favours light beats and azzur atmospheres on these tracks than he provides with Sonic or Lull, and beyond the static ambience and relentlessly lethargic rhythms there are flashes of light that keep you listening. The quirky piano figure that punctuates the nervous, warped synths of "Jim" is one such example, and the best track "Leads" spotlights flitting hi-hats against "leads" spotlights flitting hi-hats against faraway showtune emissions and spacey Rhodes colourings. But two hours in, you'll be

wishing that Harris was offering free necklaces with every copy.

BARBARA MORGENSTERN & ROBERT LUPPOK TESRI MONA CD

The pursuit of pleasures from the Berlin based electronic duo. Tesri is almost impossibly perfect, a delicious merger of the icy electro trichotomy for which Luppok is renowned with Roocco's Roco and the wistful romanticism of Morgenstern's piano and keyboard work. These deceptively simple compositions, which seem at first so disarming in their willingness to give away all their secrets on first listen, in fact continue to reveal rich new levels of detail every time the disc is played. The delightful opener "Please Wake Me For Meeks" is so textually dry, clean and compressed that it takes a while to recognise how strange and complex the electronic treatments really are. One minute the synth is alluring cheerfully like musical hairdressing, the next they're being swished around like midwinters "White Wise Rabbit" initially seems just too simple, but it gradually, almost imperceptibly, achieves great rhythmic and harmonic complexity. The closing "W/inter", with its disorienting glitchology rubbing us gently against wistful acoustic guitar and piano vignettes, is another great piece of work, music with a generous candy coating concealing the weird science that lies at its core.

NERVE NET NOISE RADIO LIFE STAMPLANT CD

The duo of Tetsuya Nakamura (aka Tetsu) and Hiroshi Kumaki present their latest collection of the most minimal of minimalist electronica. Radio Life makes even Pan Sonic circa Vello sound lush and opulent. Kumaki provided his colleague with a selection of sounds from his homemade synthesizers, whose oscillators were allowed to modulate each other with little if any human mediation. He also applied inviolent formulae to produce what he describes as an "unborn world" of sound. Nakamura's role was to assemble the sounds into 'songs' that are more like tiny sonic vignettes, repetitive electronic doodles that entice and fascinate. There is something engagingly unworldly about their aesthetic: its transparency recalling that of Kowtker at the most conceptual, but the resulting music puts the concepts to work for real. By letting the simple electronics speak for itself, Nerve Net Noise provide the perfect embodiment of the reciprocal relationship between man, machine and the natural world.

NON TOXIQUE LOST SIGA SIGA DISCIBEL CD

/BIN/MED/USA
DISCIBEL CD

The currently fashionable impulse to ape some of the trash techno-primitivism of DNF De Pina, et al is understandable in an age in which the

utopian ideal of electronica is an inclusive counterpart to punk disappears in a cloud of ever more arcane glitches. Nevertheless, hearing an album like /Bin/Med/Usa one might easily be forgiven for feeling that the current fetishisation of the early 80s Neue Deutsche Welle is just the latest commercial's version of the whole Bands Revisited/80s Newwave thing. NTL were in on the 80s Berlin scene from the start, but on the evidence of these new albums they are to DNF or Endlosende Neubeatung what A Flock of Seagulls are to David Sylvian. Sea Winters' gorge constricted beauty is unsettling enough without having to endure title lyrical diatribes like the simplistic and religious doggerel of "Opium", which is every bit as loathsome as John Lydon's similar efforts on Pi's First Issue. Both albums, particularly Siga Siga, have stretches of dreamer, less declaratory and more engaging music, but it's all too apparent why original member Achim Wollschlaeger doesn't care to have any further involvement in the project.

KK NULL PRIME RADIANT SILVERMORNING NOISE CD

Null's record label is aptly named: Prime Radiant is noise as a spray of blood-red roses, a vast wash of colour concealing so much truth. Kazuyuki Kishino has been at the forefront of the J-noise scene for over 20 years, both as guitarist/leader of extremal studio rockers Zen Geva and as a solo artist exploring the outer territories of electronica. Along with Masaoe and Mewbaw, he is part of a trinity of noise-makers whose work seems to operate at the very limits of human endurance. Like these, Null's work transcends its surface violence and reveals something rich and strange at its core. What makes this montage of live and studio work marginally less forbidding than usual is its abrupt changes of mood and texture: rather than purring as deep to cut, he covers a lot of sonic ground here, albeit a trifle of sensibly based emotion. Kishino has said that he tries to imagine through his work what music from other galaxies might sound like. If the little green men are all listening to this stuff for fun, Prime Radiant is a scary prospect for sure.

MATHIAS VON IMHOFF MENTAL SCARS SPICOL AND CD

There's an angry acceptance underlying the songs and beatless sound pieces making up Mathias Von Imhoff's recent offering from the trailblazing Canadian Spool label. Dealing in part with a missing 15 minute period of blackout the composer experienced following a car accident, the collection also stands as a respectful tribute to his grandfather, Hermann Meier, one of the forefathers of electronic music in Switzerland. "The emotions feed on itself" is the bleak poem repeated throughout "Black Hole", while "Cows" offers bleak celebration of how little the world changes. Happily, the brilliant fury of Von Imhoff's playing suggests otherwise. (Ken Hollings) □

Jazz & Improv

Reviewed by Julian Cowley

ELTON DEAN & SOPHIA DOMANCICH AVANT

HUX CD

Also saxophonist Elton Dean has written memorable themes for the various groups he has been involved with during the past four decades, but it takes the kind of prolonged exposure afforded by this set of duets to do real justice to his considerable strengths as an improviser. He has rarely sounded so vigorously present on record; and Domancich, a French pianist long affiliated to the Century axis, is adept in finding settings to enhance his communicative melodic lines. Dean's characteristically tone has a kind of compass intensity that conveys emotion without need for fussiness or sentimental embellishment. Domancich adds light and shadow, furnishing the space around Dean's playing, with resonant blocks and finely patterned detail. That coming together of temperaments and aptitudes, which makes for genuine compatibility and sends out sparks between impressing musicians, is plentifully in evidence on *Avant*.

DORAN/HAUSER/ LEIMGRUBER/ PFAMATTER/ LA FOURMI

CREATIVE WORKS CD

La Fartezze's art and grasshopper fable provides the conceptual pug this music hangs from, and insect-like busyness characterises the free play within the quartet, an impromptu entanglement of particularities. It's a musical environment that especially benefits Irish electric guitarist Christy Doran, channeling his invariably fierce imagination and energetic attack into sustained close quarters interaction. Saxophonist Urs Leimgruber approaches on Evan Parker's signature terrain, issuing pinpoint staccato bursts and needle-like threads on soprano, plus occasional moister tenor input. Percussionist Fritz Hauser and Hans-Peter Pfamatter on keyboards and electronics both play with coordinated restraint, judiciously sustaining and lulling the collective dynamics. These are highly articulate individuals; their sensitive and inventive group improvising on *La Fourmi* casts them all in a favourable light and repeated listening deserves the interest of the music.

SIDSEL ENDRESEN/ CHRISTIAN WALLUMRÖD/ HELGE STEN MERRIWINKLE

JAZZLAND CD

Singer Sidsel Endresen has shown during the past decade admirable readiness to leave her own secure zone and discover new contexts that test and extend her voice. With Merriwinkle she enters an eccentric orbit that takes her far from her initial jazz and folk points of reference into a complex blending of abstraction and theatricality. At times the sounds deliriously and emphatically make what appear to be cryptic, postmodernist overstatements in Norwegian; at other times she's disembodied, finding radical form in expressive fragments and emotional particles.

The instrumental side of this bold enterprise is handled brilliantly by unstintingly ingenious keyboard player Christian Wallumrød, complemented, on five of the 13 tracks, by Supersilent's Heigo Sten. Sten is characteristically shadowy while making significant contributions by means of his audacious assemblage of sound-manipulating technology. It's not an easy listen, but given time it becomes compelling. Endresen's combined solo-composition invites respect and attention.

HEINZ GEISSER/GUERINO MAZZOLA QUARTET CHRONOTOPY

BLACK SAINT CD

The contrasts within this group amount almost to conflicts. Mazzola's gesturally grand piano seems at odds with violinist Matt Moren's morose subtleties. Drummer Geisser's extrovert flourish seems oddly paired with electric guitarist Scott Field's underemphatic finesse. Stronger forms of accord do emerge repeatedly amid the tensions and apparent imbalances. The European pair take compositional credits for these four pieces, recorded in New York in 2002, but it's their greater restraint and more oblique contribution from the Americans that really enlivens the music. There's persistent danger of exasperated stolidity and overblown rhetoric in Geisser and Mazzola's playing. Moren and Fields provide some of the necessary counterweight through their light touch and lateral thinking. Interest arises though that tautness of uneasy collaboration, but arguably it's outweighed by the cumulative effect of excessive symbol thrash and equipt pantom.

GUERSTAD/HANA/OLSEN/ ZANUSSI BORN TO COLLAPSE

CIRCULARSTONE TORNADO CD

UltraLyd's *Chromosome Gun* LOAD CD
Saxophonist Frode Gjerstad, electric guitarist Anders Hana and drummer Morten Olsen feature on both these releases. Born to Collapse, recorded in concert in Svalbard at the end of 2003, is an hour long set comprising three energetic chunks of improvised tussling. The first two are in the main feverishly animated, paced with rapidly executed expressionistic gestures; the third is more sedate, gradual and layed. Gjerstad plays with shilly urgency on both alto sax and clarinet; Olsen adopts a peppering scatter-shot approach to his kit; Hana wrings scrawling, grinding sounds from his electric guitar. The quartet are mounded out by Per Zaruska's acoustic bass and live electronics.

Norwegian-based Kjell Brøndstøl is the fourth member of UltraLyd, a punishing thrash improv outfit. A sense of their intention and their impact can be retrieved from track titles such as "Zooties" and "Ecclesiastical". *Chromosome Gun* is a relentless mix of outright attack and sulken doom-laden idling, with Gjerstad's wild-eyed screams embedded in dense throes and swirl of guitar and bass turbulence over Olsen's manic

fearing and fleeing. Both recordings consolidate rather than make unanticipated revelations.

MICHAEL GRIFFEN & ERIC OSTROWSKI NOGGIN

REDAUSTRO CD

Seven episodes for two voices recorded between June and September 2004 by recorded noise perpetrators Griffen and Ostrowski. Ostrowski sometimes doubles on electric guitar but this release is an acoustic slakes, shrike and screech underlaid, uneasy listening that touches raw nerves and could undoubtedly empty crowded rooms within minutes. But if you are up for a test-to-destruction experience, then *Noggin* is your customised dentists drill, courtesy of Portland, Oregon's Raszkuto label. In fact, once accustomed, there's pleasure to be found in the chatter and glide of the bowed instruments, the unyielding tenseness and veneer of their exchange. Griffen and Ostrowski have been playing together for more than a decade and their taste for the raw is unmistakably a cultivated thing. On their own terms, it works.

BÉLA HAMVAS GROUP FOR INTUITIVE MUSIC INTUITIVE CD

Béla Hamvas was a Hungarian essayist who died in 1968. He's commemorated through an arts club in Copenhagen where this 'Intuitive Music' group came into existence. The nomenclature acknowledges Stockhausen's influence and two of his textual sources intended to stimulate musical intuition are realised here. Predominantly verbal prompts from lesser known composers complete the programme. It's improvised music although the choices made by the players seem less self-reflexive and responsive to intrinsic musical issues than a consciously free session might induce. Ideas of a fixed kind intervene. Nonetheless, performances place emphasis on cooperation and mixture of abilities rather than displays of virtuosity. The results are pleasantly diverting with improvisation, ranging from electric organ to accents, casting up some curious alignments. The recordings, audibly made in live concerts between 1997 and 2003, are primarily of documentary interest.

DAVE LIEBMAN & ELLERY ESKELIN DIFFERENT BUT THE SAME

HATOLLOGY CD

A generation apart, saxophonists Liebman and Eskelin have never settled comfortably for long into straight ahead post-bop units. Inclusion of bebop composer Elton Dannenberg's "Gird" and "Hot House", plus themes by Lee Konitz and Wayne Shorter, and Celeste Parris's canonical jazz's shanty "What Is The Thing Called Love" indicates that *Different But The Same* is conveying more or less on their middle ground. The warmed bebop norm is expert and strident from bassist Tom Manno and drummer Jim Black. Manno, a third and tested Liebman sideman, contributes a sprightly lode and

soothing tone; Black, a regular Eskelin associate, juggles melical figures while sustaining the momentum elegantly like the horns spor and hornless or late turns to spin out their variations, prioritising raw-edged ebullience. Liebman's driving contribution, "The Gun Wars", angry ones subduing into pensive meditation over Black's rattling drums, delivers its message with appropriate sobriety. Overall though, this enjoyable release conveys vigorous affirmation of shared and basic musical values.

LONDON IMPROVISERS ORCHESTRA RESPONSES, REPRODUCTION & REALITY

EMANEM CD

Five pieces performed at London's Freedom Of The City festival in May 2003, plus two from that event a year later. The LOI is a phenomenon that's worth documenting in itself, as an order of depth and diversity of improvising musicians in the city of present, intriguing for example to hear BJ Cole's peevish scowl glimmering through the 2004 grouping. And the music is, as ever, full of interest as ways are found to organise collective expression out of an assembly of 30 unaccompanied independent players. Conducting is Brian Morris's legacy to the ensemble, individuals taking turns to impose degrees of regulation, shaping and monitoring the large group's mobility and density through actions, ideas and even scores. The task here falls into the capable hands of guitarist Dave Tucker, bassists Simon H Friel and David Leahy, saxophonist Caroline Krasabel, electronics welder Pat Thomas and violinist Phil Wachsmann. For all that, the track that at initial listening has most appeal is "Proceeding", freely improvised within its own unambiguous terms of reference. Then again, maybe the discipline of being orchestrated through conductor riverbenches through that effective piece of instant composing.

RAVISH MOMIN'S TRIO TARANA CLIMBING THE BANYAN TREE

CLEAN FEED CD

Legacies of Chinese, Middle Eastern and Indian cultural roots self-evidently lead the playing of the New York trio. Yet the music of violinist Jason Kao Hwang, Shanti Ezz Blumentkrantz on oud and bass, and drummer Ravish Momin sounds comfortably itself as a successful fusion project should do. Hwang has an impressive capacity to add dramatic dimensions to melodic contours, transforming shape into vivid event. Blumentkrantz, best known from Danny Zaim's *Barish* project, is a completely enticing bassist and he out draws other colours from the basic melodic material. Add Momin's agility and distinctive percussive accents and the outcome is a high-spirited and genuinely refreshing set, free from old-fashioned exotic effects. Soothing through the music is a sure sense that the trio were totally committed to the project and derived real enjoyment from it. That transmits □

Modern Composition

Reviewed by Brian Morton

JOHN ADAMS ROAD MOVIES

SANCTUARY CD

John Adams chamber works are scarce, so the title piece for violin and piano is a welcome release. It's also a useful reminder to those who keep using a description "Road Movies" really only as long as a description. Road Movies opens on a quietly optimistic relaxed groove that settles into a more melancholy and meditative stillness in the middle section, the finale is headlining, though marked "90 per cent swing", and brings the journey to a close, if not quite a destination. The other pieces performed by pianist Andrew Russo and violinist/parent James Ehnes are mostly older, though *Hallelujah Junction* for two guitars is also mid-90s. *Phrygian Gates* for solo piano was Adams' first mature score, a half-hour tour of half the keys, smart and playful and topped for sheer emotional impact by the related *China Gates*, written as an appreciable score for young pianists and played here by Russo with unaffected simplicity.

DIETER AMMANN THE FREEDOM OF SPEECH

HATHORN CD

Born in 1962 in Switzerland, Ammann made the switch from jazz bass to composition in the 90s. The earliest piece here is a cassette solo, *Imagination Against Numbers*, that has undergone considerable transformation since its first appearance. Ammann works slowly and with incredible concentration. The dramatic force of *Violazione* would have been tremendous if not handled so carefully. The percussion crashes and overblown flute are as disturbing as anything written since Le Sacre Du Printemps, and the lonely dialogue of the cello (David Rivkin) playing with the ensemble is all the more pointed and poignant. The "gohrns" or "beard" form of the three string bow Homages draws substance from Rihm, Kohn and Schoenberg without ever lapsing into parody and bland polytextuality. Ammann is a thoughtful composer who merits as much care in the listening as he takes in the writing.

GEORGE ANTHEIL THE COMPLETE STRING QUARTETS

OTHER MENUS CD

The self-styled Bad Boy Of Music (title of his 1945 autobiography) is best remembered for his *Ballet Mécanique* and for his Persian friendships and weird undertakings like his torpedo project with Hedy Lamarr. He was first taken up seriously by Ezra Pound, whose own music was premiered alongside Anthel's first string quartet in July 1924. Others followed in 1927 and 1948, with another sequence of *Six Little Pieces* for four strings in 1931. Look to the very early Lithuanian Night, written the year Anthel left the US for Europe, and you have the sum of his output for string quartet. Musically, it's as dull as anything written with the exception of "Igor's lap" bougerie and in a style that does not so much evolve as lurch from impressionism to futurism and mechanistic and back.

LUCA FRANCESCONI LET ME BLEED/TERRE DEL RIMORSO

STRADOKRUS CD

Let Me Bleed is written, quasi in requiem, in memory of 23 year old Carlo Giuliani, killed by carabinieri during anti-globalisation demonstrations in Genova in July 2001. It was pure chance that Francesconi should have found Attilio Bertolucci's poem *Locustum Sangrante* just as events unfolded on television. The work's words in response, for unaccompanied mixed choir, is a strange mix of sorrow and defiant optimism. It's dwelled here by Tenor Del Rinsore, written the year before for choir and orchestra, a complex mix of elements – Sicilian anthropology, Dionysian cults, the "maius" culture that ostensibly follows a tarantula's bite, but is actually a symbol for collective psychic release – which is almost too much for the musical structure, though Francesconi holds it together by sheer force of will. The singing, by The Swedish Radio Choir, is magnificent and the live recording is good, albeit marred by a couple of overloud coughs, which should have been shot instead of Carlo Giuliani.

ANTHONY GILBERT BEHOLDING A RAINBOW

NMC CD

Usually the best known of the "generation of 1934" – Britten, Maxwell Davies, Goehr, Howarth, Opitz – Anthony Gilbert is the figurehead of what some call the "Second Manchester School" Pupils at the (Royal) Northern College of Music included Simon Butler, Cheryl Cram, Simon Holt and Kate Romanow. Since he retired in 1999, there has been more time for his own patient progress, and for visits to Australia. The texts for the song cycle *Certain Lights Reflecting* are by Tasmanian poet Sarah Day, who also inspired the opening... *Into the Gyre Of Matter* Dance for wind ensemble. Gilbert has never written an immoderately dull score. He started late and came to composition and academia via a string of day jobs. There's a deflection to these pieces, the kind of quiet concentration that disappears when commissions flood in. The work's career, which is the title piece, has the touching grandeur of a cathedral model built out of matchsticks, or rather out of carefully disguised materials: sonata, passacaglia, epithetonic harmony. Siskat. Anthony Maxwell plays beautifully, particularly on the opening "Passacaglia Nascimentum". The word means hidden, because here, as in the beautiful *Chorus*, there are, for winds, the means are carefully disguised. There is, as ever, tenderness, but this time cockroaches rather than antediphen. The fact the inspiring text is a fragment by Avraham Ben Zviach, the first modern Hebrew poet. It evokes a false dawn, tinged with betrayal. A perfect introduction to a seriously underreviewed composer.

RESONANCE CHAMBER WORKS: VOLUME 1

NEW TURTLE RECORDINGS CD

Nine pieces from four composers – John M. Coabine, Carlo Vinetto Frizzo, Aaron Johnson,

William Pie – who are still little known outside the American South, though all have some international experience. Frizzo's song after Robert Frost and string the *Celestial* Honours use the most conventional classical instrumentation. Piece writes for saxophones, solo and quartet, as does Coabine, though his *Persepolis* is for solo diatonic and Beasts in the Window (using the European notation for BB-E-A-Eb) (Bb as its motive) is for solo tuba. Johnson's opening *Prologue And Dance* is a lively guitar piece drawing on Black and White Lullabies and he takes both ears and the tail with *Melodrama*, a bright, funny baroque between a saxophone and a cello.

NICHOLAS SACKMAN/DIANA BURRELL/GEORFFREY POOLE LUCIFER: NEW MUSIC FOR PIANO, BRASS & PERCUSSION

NMC CD

The logic is quite straightforward – to create a body of work for a relatively unexplored instrumentation. Only Kereke's *Circle* springs to mind. Sackman's Mel conforts the challenge of writing a concerto that does not simply replace a mad or string orchestra with a relatively inflexible brass ensemble. What happens is that the musical argument, vividly stated, is pressed between soloist and two very different string groups who can never quite agree on what they're hearing. Burrell's Gold uses two smaller brass groups – high and low – against piano and gongs to create a piece of kinetic sculpture that reflects light off a surface which maintains its elemental integrity – the metal represented by repeated C notes rather than Au – even as it shimmers and changes. Poole's title piece is more concerned with darkness, or at least a defiant ball from the light. Subtitled *Concerto For Piano And 21 Loud Instruments*, it lives up to its billing. Throwing in a Black Mass and a touch of the devil's music (a 12-bar piece) along the way. Philip Mead is the soloist throughout, in front of The RNCM Brass Ensemble.

GIACINTO SCIELI SUONO ROTONDO

WERGO CD

PIANO WORKS 2

MODIS CD

In his century year, Sciel's complex and ambiguous legacy is in tatters, even by arguments about authenticity that never seem to turn into interesting discussions about the nature of composition. So think God for trombonist Mike Svoboda, bassist Stefano Sordani, percussionist/guitarist Michael Klebanek and, on the Mode disc, pianist Stephen Clarke, who simply get on with the business of realising these strange "scores" and impressions. Clarke's two pieces, Suite No 2 from 1930 and *Adon Music* from 1955 bring to the beginning and end of Sciel's piano writing. Subsequently he was to favour the maximalist Ondiola and the tape machine as a "writing" device and moved completely away from the virtuosic approach of the earlier score. These are lovely

pieces all the same, and interesting to put alongside Stockhausen's piano pieces, Boulez's *Nocturnes* and Messiaen's early works as representatives of a new piano language as far beyond Liszt as Liszt was beyond Beethoven.

The solo works and the improvisations at the Wergo disc are perhaps closer to how we now think of Sciel, displaying a sort of beyond semantics, an instrumental language beyond improvisation or idiom. Fine performance probably isn't the issue here, but everyone plays beautifully. Why there's so much self-serving nonsense floating round a truly great and challenging name.

ISANG YUN GONG-HU/CONCERTO/ SALMO/IN BALANCE

CAMERAATA ASIA CD

Isang Yun's is one of the strangest stories in modern music – kidnapped from one divided nation and dragged home to another to face a show trial. In June 1967, Yun was dragged and abducted by South Korean agents in West Germany and taken back to Seoul where he was tortured and imprisoned as a spy for the North. All of these pieces date from after his release on international politics in 1989. *Salmo* for alto flute solo is the earliest, composed 1976 on part of the score, because it derives from the 1977 cantata *The Wise Man*. Like the roughly contemporary *Concerto For Flute And Small Orchestra*, it demonstrates a complete and unsway mastery of the instrument, with fine playing from Rosetta Shostak. The soloist on the other works is hapless Ussula Holliger, whose husband Heinrich conducts. In *Balance* seeks to reconcile "heavenly" and "earthly tones", while the title piece – hard not to read as "Gang-Ho" – is a celebration of the harp ball. Yun did die of ten years ago, time for this beautiful music to be more widely recognised.

PAMELA Z A DELAY IS BETTER

STANLAND CD

Sheer genius from the most gifted and enterprising vocalist/composer/audio artist in the US since the heyday of Joan La Barbara and Meredith Monk. The voice is strong enough on its own to move, but Z has extended her repertoire enormously, using found percussion (like the five gallon water bottle on *Pure Music*), concrete samples, synchronous and asynchronous clock effects and the gesture-controlled BodySynth. The effects are stunning. The oldest things here are *Po Titles 'You'* from 1986, which uses the Y section of a catalogue she found while working in Tower Records, and *Badagade* from a couple of years later, a useful glimpse of her early experiments with delay effects. The real standouts are *Geek Speak* (1999), which plays with our technical obsessions, and the closing *Obsolescence*, Addison And The Antistrophe Group (1991), a collaboration with hazy Barbara Imhoff made in tribute to Paulina Otero, who wrote the liner notes, which brings the thing full circle, just like a Part 2 composition. Essential. □

Outer Limits

Reviewed by Jim Haynes

BORIS & MERZWOW 04092001

INDICIA LP

A collaboration between Japanese heavyweights Boris and Merzbow is supposed to be huge, loud, atomically explosive, and ultimately great. But 04092001 falls short of such expectations. This album is hopelessly marred by a terrible recording quality that has absolutely no dynamic range whatsoever. Within the thin veil of sound pressed onto this expensive piece of vinyl, some apparently played a couple of tracks from their *Heavy Robots* album complete with guitar freakouts and fat in the ear punchlines of "Noah!" at the end of each riff, while Merzbow injected random bits of noise that had very little to do with what Boris was playing. Even if they were in complete harmony during that performance, all that anyone can hear is a tepid drum kick that sounds like a sock hitting cardboard, a guitarist who may be doing practicing next door, and a spitting vacuum cleaner. The only thing worthwhile about this album is that Boris records phycot in value, often tripping in value in only a few moments. Of interest, then, to the stock market only.

JONATHAN COLECLOUGH & LETH THE HEAT KWC CD

Typically with violinist Rina Kiyama, Kiyoyama Kiyoharu (aka Leth) seeks out well abandoned warehouse spaces in which he improvises around the natural reverberation of those spaces using cello, prepared guitar, and found elements from those spaces. For his collaboration with veteran British drone/collage artist Jonathan Coleclough, Kiyoharu presents dense textures of metal being scraped on the far side of that warehouse, as well as closely observed sounds of minuscule clicks and pangs from the same objects. Coleclough overfills this source material with his signature blur of electric signals that sublimely hover before expanding their intensity through diaphragm sweeps and mistreated phase patterns. Both Kiyoharu's and Coleclough's sounds progress on parallel tracks up to a dramatic crescendo at which Coleclough's drone abruptly halts, revealing a frenzy of activity from Kiyoharu dragging items across the warehouse floor. As Kiyoharu quells his actions, Coleclough introduces deep sea sonar pings and a subtle wash of worried sound. It's an evocative, beautiful combination in which both artists have plenty of opportunity to showcase their talents.

GROWING/ MARK EVAN BURDEN GROWING/ MARK EVAN BURDEN ZUM CD

This split release houses compelling pieces of avant rock expressionism channelled into two compelling definitions of minimalism. In their pieces which date back to 2002, Growing continues to showcase their impressive collaborative overworks from guitar feedback sustained melodic notes, and gurgling analog synth that evoke a kaleidoscopic twirl for

sterner bliss. The contribution from Mark Evan Burden (formerly of Get Huskie and Glass Candy) is one man's attempt to replicate Conlon Nancom's player piano pieces with all ten of his fingers striking the keys as fast as he physically can. Inevitably the tempo slows after a few minutes, and Burden gathers his strength for another mighty attack upon the piano. Cheap electric screeches and rudimentary feedback from overdone delay pedals slowly emerge as his composition drifts towards equally stark but far more spacy clouds of notes, ending up sounding like a vulnerable rendition of Philip Glass or Michael Nyman.

GIUSEPPE IELASI GESINE HAPNA CD

For several years now, the Swedish label Hapna has detoured its way across the landscape of experimental music, setting a very high standard of craftsmanship in their publications of generative synthesis, neo-Prog explorations, and electroacoustic improvisation. Giuseppe Ielasi's meticulous, quiet guitar compositions make for another exceptional album from Hapna. While drawing from the traditions of Louis Mazzacane, Consors and John Fahey, Ielasi's slow motion angular patterns exhibit an intricate and a precision over such rounded, more painterly sound, and wispie stroke from his guitar, Ielasi expands these forms with an ink skill at electroacoustic abstraction, as quiet field recordings culled from contact morphologies and hermetically active drones close into the desolate spaces between his fragmented chords and notes. Beautifully done.

LUGOSI LUGOSI CWR CD

Plenty of New Zealand avant rock/free noise ensembles have looked to Sonic Youth for inspiration, almost always slipping away the pop sensibilities from Evol and Sister to get at a slow burning core of awaking either The Dead C and Galt are the best known for such work, although Surface of the Earth, HST, and Dean Robertson's effort *One Day* offer wonderful variations on this theme, as do the posthumous recordings of Lugosi. Fronted by Campbell Kneale, who has since gone on to form the unstoppable Blackwell Cat Model, Lugosi broadcast an sonic tempest of languid distortions held together by sedate elliptical pluckings and loose rhythm structures. Often awakening with a stupor of controlled feedback, Kneale and company were back sweeping sawnwave motions, serpentine sites, and snarling amplifier buzz into the maelstrom patterns of molten drone rock deconstruction.

**ANTONY MILTON
SIRENS/AND WHERE THE
COLOURED PLANES ARE
RAFTS
LAST VISIBLE DOG CD**

New Zealand wargamest Antony Milton recorded *Sirens* and *And Where The Coloured Planes Are* Rafts in Otago, New Zealand and Stradbroke

Island, Australia respectively in the late 90s, at which time they were published in tiny editions on cassette and CD-R. For *Sirens*, Milton describes the songwriting process as an investigation into a "fear mysticism" during an unusually wet spell for that typically dry region of New Zealand. Such details give tremendous insight into these 10 fierce recordings of obscure avant folk sketches that could be a missing link between Alberto Gattuso and NZ's legendary Xposivity sound, and contemporary acts such as Avarus or Farsura. Thrust in front of the mixer key guitar chords and the scoping whine of a violin, an abused microphone amplifies every gasp of air and crumpled Milton's vocal pangs and hisses along the brink of four-track distortion. The unkempt, dank quality of Milton's recordings are perfectly suited to the song's uniform meloncholy punctuated with a few bouts of anxious mania, all the while rendering an apt portrait of the environment around him where everything is on the verge of rot.

STEVE RODEN ART(H) ART CENTER COLLEGE OF DESIGN CD

In the artist's notes for this large scale collaborative installation with robotics engineer Avrami Platenberg, Thomas and geophysicist Mark Sirens, Steve Roden carves his "My initial focus in working with scientists was that the technology would be the only thing people would see or pay attention to." Given the huge amount of conceptual baggage that the three bring to *Art(H)*, Roden is right to be concerned. This installation translates the data of an earthquake through small robotic arms that strike 80 glassed-in bins, situated on top of a unfinished wooden tube large enough for an observer to wander through comfortably. As an installation, *Art(H)* embraces a common opening strategy for sound installations in cycling through a set of simple sounds, preceded by a heavily codified preamble to be digested by the audience as they experience the piece. For 60 minutes, the whirr of a robot arm followed by an immediate ping from a glassed-in bin form small clusters of sound at an irregular yet steady pace. Over that duration, the sounds quickly lose their dynamics and the conceptual elements begin to dominate the proceedings. Of course, Roden can cleverly explain away any lack the CD of *Art(H)* may possess at its conclusion: it's just a field recording of the installation.

SEHT THE VOICE OF THE TANIWAHA LAST VISIBLE DOG CD

For this album, New Zealand avant guitarist Stephen Clover (aka Seht) presents a roundabout tribute on "Requiem For John Fahey", referencing the deceased guitarist through the Fahey-inspired Happy Days by Jim O'Rourke. His awakening denard of Appalachian fingerpicking on his acoustic guitar opens alongside a slow burning hum which resembles O'Rourke's. Increasingly noxious heavy-guitar army. The detail that Clover's dense element was taken from the introductory feedback from Gang Of Four's "Love

Like Anthrax" is a nice addition. However, this clever exercise in appropriation stands out as the only off developed idea in this mixed bag of one-off projects and half-baked concepts. The typo-based embrace from the Kerg synthesis on "Meise The Baby Jesus Cry Scene Meme" and the soggy field recording of rain on "Valentine's Day 2003" are fine recordings. However, the poems of minimalism that Clover aspires to in each of his pieces is much more of a catch upon traditional archetypes than a legitimate investigation into what such reduction can achieve within the process of soundmaking.

KEIICHIRO SHIBUYA KEIICHIRO SHIBUYA ATAK CD

Due to the short term attention span of the culture of late, the datapunk of Y2K has faded into distant memory. As elusive as it appears now, there was a very real, panicked fear that digital technology could freeze up and cast a systemic shadow upon the whole globe. At that time, Oval, Ryoji Kaida, and the entire Raster-Noton roster stood out among the large host of electron technicians who explored the aesthetic of paranoia with their successful recombinatorial uses of digital errors grafted onto a post-Redio framework. Electrical fields of glitches, hard disk skips, and the emata of malfunctioning code easily slid into cool, detached electronics grooves and decayed melodies. Jump five years forward to Keiichiro Shibuya's meticulously constructed debut album on his own Atak label; this album holds all of the aesthetic trappings of New Noise's shapely mechanisms and Ikeda's early psychoacoustic sawnwave pulsations. As solely evocative and exquisite as it is, however, it still comes across as anachronistic.

UNITED STATES OF BELT PANCAKE ALLEY CHLICE/CDN CD

There are credits to Joe Rawlings on banjo and electronics, Jason Linker (animation) and Erika Tomkins on "Bacteriophage pancakes", but *Pancake Alley*, by Boston's United States Of Belt, is essentially a segment field recording that seems to pass around some unrecognizably aquatic aerodrome from event to event, an aural equivalent of the "unliking eye" technique used by film maker Alexander Sokorov in Russian Ark. This, however, is all-American fun, with its dawled renditions of the National Anthem and a series of sonic Kitar staves about like the burning and balloons following a Party Convention. Indeed, if there's a "reading" you can make of the two extended pieces that comprise *Pancake Alley*, it's a sense of the disorientation following Bush's re-election in 2004. Flowers (cannon fire?) unleash with unsteady patriotic abandon, sheets of old MOR drift daphnagogically into the rafters, like oval echoes of the buzzed American dream. Passing, homely evocations of American U.S. are distorted and cut across by the pollution and blackness of random detours. An engrossing soundscape, drawn from the best and worst country in the world. (David Stubbs) □

Print Run

New music books: devoured, dissected, dissed



Just like Sister Ray says: *The Velvet Underground*

ALL YESTERDAY'S PARTIES: THE VELVET UNDERGROUND IN PRINT 1966-70

CLINTON HEYLIN
DA CARO ILLUSTRATIONS
BY EDWIN POUNCEY

The story of the Velvet Underground and their importance in the development of rock has been told many times, most notably in Victor Books and Gerard Malanga's Up-Tight: The Velvet Underground Story, which remains the definitive document on the group to date. Dylan and Van Morrison biographer Clinton Heylin's gathering together of critical clippings that were written during the VU's five-year existence almost mirrors Albin Zak II's earlier *The Velvet Underground Companion: Four Decades Of Commentary* (1997) collection. However, *All Yesterday's Parties* gives more of a historical context — and thereby gives the reader a real feeling of what went on, from the VU's early Andy Warhol promoted "happenings" to their demise after the *Loaded* album sessions, which saw the departure of founder member Lou Reed.

Chronologically organised and amply illustrated with photographs of rare posters, ads and flyers from the various stages of the group's career — together with a supplementary listing of all known song titles — Heylin's collection is obviously geared towards the hardcore Velvets

fan. But rather than being simply yet another resurrection of an already exhaustively examined 60s phenomenon, the book provides an insight into the development of rock journalism at a time when it was still in its infancy. When the VU began performing and recording in 1966, the army of Beatnik influenced groups that made up the British Invasion were still in control, and whatever press that existed back then tended to be directed at teenagers, where the emphasis was more on what type of kinks the group were wearing, or the length of their hair. The early essays here capture that innocence; that the press were completely unprepared for the full sonic assault of the group, with John Cale's screeching electric viola and Nico's sex queen vocal, instantly evoked them from any pop perception that many journalists were initially eager to place them in.

The VU's connection with Pop Artist supreme Andy Warhol was another factor which put the press on their guard, especially when they learned that he had "produced" their first album, *The Velvet Underground And Nico*, and was responsible for designing the iconic banana that graced its cover. Early reports of the VU's shows at Dorn and Balloon Farm in New York, and Trip in Los Angeles (where they became an integral part of Warhol's bid to stage his multimedia package *Exploding Plastic Inevitable* on the West

Coast) are brimming with suggestions that their music was nothing more than an art prank coordinated by Warhol the arch-manipulator. The majority of the critics of the day failed to appreciate that the Velvets' unbridled take on rock embodied the heart and soul of New York. Their sound epitomised the grit and hustle of the streets, shot through with a jolt of electric thrill that harnessed the raw literary power of Bob Dylan with the minimalist, driving roar of La Monte Young's Theater Of Eternal Music. It was the combination of Reed's pop sensibility and Cale's classically trained experimentalism that gave the Velvets a definite edge. Even without Warhol's stamp of approval, it would have got them noticed, and eventually heeded, by the still-embryonic rock media.

The first signs of this are to be found in Sandy Pearlman's "Round Velvet Underground", a review of the second VU album *White Light/White Heat*, which he wrote for Paul Williams's *Crawdaddy* rock listserve in June 1968. Pearlman comments on the black humour to be found on "The Gift" and "Lady Godiva's Operation", and the hypnotic qualities of the music (especially during "Sister Ray"). He's unsure whether it is being played badly or not — there is, however, a rhythm in Pearlman's writing style that shows enthusiasm and wonder, a technique adopted and improved upon by other writers featured here such as

Robert Greenfield, Lenny Kaye and outlaw rock journalist Lester Bangs, whose 1971 review of the first VU album, *Loaded*, for *Creem* flashes back through their history, expresses stinging outrage at the way Lou Reed was treated by his manager, and heaps praise on what he feels is a record that "just seems to go on and on, getting better and better the more thoroughly it's digested". While reading this book it helps to have a copy of VU's CD box set *Peel Slowly And See* close at hand to appreciate that these contemporary critiques of the group and their music still ring true.

Occasionally, this volume throws out a surprise learning curve. When Lou Reed is interviewed in 1969 by *Rembrandt* Jim Martin, he discusses his belief in ritual and, remarkably, his disbelief in the theory of evolution. Elsewhere, guitarist Sterling Mossman shares a memory with Greg Barrios about performing at the Cinematheque with the Velvets' first drummer Angus Macdonald, and reveals the reasons for the group's legendary feud with Frank Zappa.

The Velvets' powerful legacy is celebrated by Patti Smith in the final chapter, with a speech she delivered in 1996 at the induction of the VU into the Rock 'n' Roll Hall Of Fame. "They are the Velvet Underground and their work is the clipper ship," she states. "They are the Velvet Underground and we salute them." □

THE LAST MILES: THE MUSIC OF MILES DAVIS, 1980-1991

GEORGE COLE

COLLIER HOBBS #25
BY BRIAN MORTON

Everyone knows that after 1975 he wasn't worth a button. Tired, sick, creatively spent, reduced to chasing an audience with a series of funk, pop and hip-hop crossovers, playing a pimp on Miami Vice, chumming up to Prince, Green Gartside, even Nik Kershaw. For most of the 1980s, the Prince of Darkness behaved more like a dispossessed potentate, out of touch, exiled from a jazz chart that seemed ever less relevant, outplayed and outgirt by the young men from New Orleans he treated with such contempt on a *Northern Soul* stage in June 1985. Miles's refusal to let Wynton Marsalis sit in, an accepted part of jazz protocol (by everyone except Miles), was the last straw for some. With his lip almost gone and running on empty, Miles passed out. Everyone knows this...

Everyone except George Cole, fortunately. Far from seeing the 1980 comeback as a final throw, courageous maybe, but steeped in bathos from a man who had played with Charlie Parker, John Coltrane and who had reinvented jazz language not once but twice, Cole finds the records and concert appearances of the final years to be among the most exciting and

innovative of Miles's whole career.

The reversion has been working both backwards and forwards. Much effort has been expended over the last few years to suggest that Miles wasn't the bebop duffer we were all sold for long enough. The "lived technique" he brooded into something new – cool, remote, quiet, slow, middle register – evaporates when you listen to his solo on "New's The Time" with Charlie Parker. There's been a shift at the other end of the story as well. Cole's practical premise is spot on.

Most biographers and commentators – Ian Carr, Jan Lohmann – tended to skate over the comeback years. The balances only began to be redressed with the publication of Paul Tingen's *Miles Beyond*, a detailed study of the "electric years". Cole takes it a step further, looking session by session, date by date, at the work from the *Man With The Horn* in 1980 to the posthumous release in 1992 of *On the Run*, the Miles album even diehard fans will happily shed.

Cole's pre-chapters do more than tell the story so far and contribute one major corrective to the consensus. Were his years of "quietness" really that? Even given his sickness and questionable mental health, how probable is it that one of the most innovative artists of his time would simply give up? It's clear that even during that troubled time, Miles thought about music constantly and made

more than one attempt to put a session group together. The argument is not helped by the paucity of recorded evidence. Between the turbulent Osaka concert of 1 February 1975 and early summer 1980, there is only one unissued session, with Larry Coryell, Al Foster and others, on which Miles played only organ. His lip wasn't in anything like playing shape for at least a year after that and the early comeback concerts were depressing spectacles.

Unbelievers would argue that they were even more depressing three and five and ten years later, as Miles began to cover "Time After Time" and "Perfect Day", add overdubs to what was otherwise a Marcus Miller record on Judo. But, contrary to Scott Fitzgerald, there are second acts in American lives, and in Miles's case, possibly a third and fourth. This, remember, was the guy who felt creatively spent and was on his uppers physically at the end of the 40s, and again a decade later. His discography is as interesting for its gaps as for highpoints like *Bitch Of The Cool*, *Kind Of Blue* and *Ditches* drew.

Cole has spoken to practically everyone who worked with Miles in his final decade. He has traced the evolution of each of these final albums, cut by cut and splice by splice. The only problem is its obsessive, near-handicapped. Each time someone is wheeled on to describe what a

complete ass Miles could be, how dodgy the lip was, there is someone else who loves him like a father, thinks he was playing just great. However, Cole can be forgiven everything for the sheer wealth of information he brings to bear and with the lightest of touches. Those who lament the non-appearance of the Miles and Herdrix tapes or the unexpected dead-end of his friendship with Prince will wonder yet more at the thought of Miles writing a song for Mick Jagger, or whether Rubberband – alarmingly described as "Miles meets 'New Wave' by guitarist Randy Hall – will ever see the light of day.

Far from capitalizing to a nostalgic market that would have paid Carnegie Hall prices to hear him play "Freddie Frelander" any night of the year, Miles kept pushing forward. He wanted popular success, but on his own terms. He didn't want to play with Wynton because he didn't want some college stud cleaning up his stage, and besides, why should an old gunslinger risk his lip talking on some flesh-kid? What The Last Miles underlines most forcefully is that, for all the talked-up collaborators and influential associates – Coltrane, Bill Evans, Gil Evans, Wayne Shorter, Joe Macero, John McLaughlin – there was only one man in charge of that amazing body of music. He comes out of Cole's account larger, warmer and if anything more important than ever. □

WIRED FOR SOUND: ENGINEERING AND TECHNOLOGIES IN SONIC CULTURES

PAUL D. GREENE & THOMAS PORCELLO (EDITORS)

WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY PRESS ISBN \$24.95

BY BRIAN MARLEY

If you mix up a group of musicians playing acoustic instruments and route the signals to a mixing board to a PA system, what emerges from the loudspeakers is a form of electronic music no matter how small an intervention the sound engineer wishes to make, and how discreetly it is done, the nature of the music will have been changed. But interventions can be major, and disorienting throw to the world. Throughout the 20th century and into the 21st, sound engineers have assumed an increasingly important role in music making, and the studio mixing board has become an instrument in its own right (as demonstrated by Phil Spector,

King Tubby, et al.). Many Beatles fans baffle when George Martin is described as "the fifth Beatle", but they're right to do so. His creative use of recording technology contributed enormously not just to the recorded sound of the group but to how, and in what manner, their music evolved. By the time of Sgt. Pepper's, the Beatles' music had become so technologically enhanced, and so dependent on studio-based technology, that their identity as a live act was all but lost.

The difference between the faithful chronicling of a live performance and what happens when the performance takes place in the studio is one of the threads running through several of *Wired For Sound's* 13 chapters. Fredrick J. Moehn tackles it most fully in "The Dec is Not the Avenue". Schornegge's *Mimesis in Samba Recording*". In his account of how the samba/dance is organised during Rio de Janeiro's annual carnival, Moehn describes how recordings of the samba schools competing in

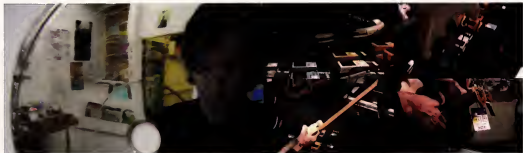
the event were initially made in situ, on the half-mile long custom-built *Passarela do Samba* (Samba Path), and how the shift to making studio recordings prior to the carnival impacted on the way the samba schools began to present their music. He explores the social and cultural implications of this decision and provides a fascinating but not dystopian insight into how technology warps aspects of culture. As this chapter illustrates, the book is primarily ethnographic in emphasis, but historical and psychological perspectives are strongly represented too. Topics include: Jakartan fusions of sleeky Indian film-song rhythms, Heavy Metal and gamelan; the juxtaposition of Heavy Metal, Tibetan Buddhist chant, rap and and Himalayan folk songs in urban Nepal; pop, the collaboration between an Australian aboriginal didgeridoo player and an English export record producer; a perspective on how the increasing "heaviness" of Heavy Metal music is perceived by teenagers; and how the "techno sound" (a

more earthy, more live-sounding alternative to the ultra-smooth Nashville sound) is produced.

Of the two chapters devoted to radio, Timothy D. Baylor's "Music And The Rise Of Radio In Twentieth America: Technological Imperialism, Socialization, And The Transformation Of Intimacy" is the most illuminating. I had always assumed that moves led off to studios, but apparently radio got there first. Anyone who could afford the lofty price of a radio set, or who had a neighbour or a relative who owned one, no longer had to go downtown to frequent the vaudeville theatres for entertainment. As radio took off like a rocket, vaudeville began its terminal decline. But it's the nature of the earliest programming for US radio that's so fascinating, and how radio was sold to the general public as a zealous medium for the general reader, this chapter and Moehn's may have the most immediate appeal, but the range and scope of the material in *Wired For Sound* is likely to provide long-term rewards. □

Cross Platform

Sound in other media. This month: If something strange is happening in your local record shop or guitar store, there's a good chance that Australian infiltration artist Marco Fusinato is behind it. Bruce Russell investigates.



Left: Marco Fusinato with one of his *Q_King Variations* records. Right: Still from Fusinato's *Free improvisations in music shop*

"With all the works I make, the idea determines the form," explains Melbourne-based provocateur Marco Fusinato. "I am not a musician, but I have used musical instruments and contexts to best get a specific idea across." Fusinato first came to my attention in 1998, when, contributing to an exhibition at Sydney's Museum of Contemporary Art, he handed out electric guitars and Marshall stacks to ten non-musicians and asked them to jam in E for three minutes with the volume cranked up to 11. While Fusinato's work has a streak of ironic subversion, he is also dead serious about his art practice, which is in part fuelled by his enduring love of music. Punk was a formative influence. "The vital aspect of that movement was its spirit," he declares, "and what inspired me was its defiant attitude, the sense of intervention and the whole DIY ethos. It demonstrated that anything was possible." Fusinato's unique contribution has been the wholehearted way he has realised this in an art context, while using the means of production commonly associated with music.

Fusinato works across a range of media including painting, video and recording. A collaboration with Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore resulted in a series of works consisting of improvised noise, red monochrome paintings executed by Fusinato during the time taken to play Moore's tracks, and a video documentation of the 'action'. He also has a noise project with fellow artist John Nason, under the moniker Solver; their own FreewaySound imprint has released CD documents of these various works.

Nothing demonstrates his commitment to combining conceptual art with the procedures of music making and recording more than his ongoing *Free Project*. This is an as yet uncompleted series of ten performances in guitar shops around the world, which he describes as "FREE – no cost – no structure – in-store – improvised". Fusinato enters the shop and humbly asks to try a certain distortion pedal. As a consequence the shop assistant has to let him use a guitar and an amplifier. He then activates a hidden mandrake recorder and begins to crank out a formless, high volume feedback improvisation until asked to stop, or until destruction becomes the better part of

valour, as it did in Copenhagen – where the threatening demeanour of the Metellers in charge of the store inhibited his outpourings of sonic jazz to the point that the set was the quietest, but also the longest, on record.

His commitment is tested to the maximum at the point where the pedal has to be declined and returned after the performance. It's no way to make yourself popular with retail staff, but it's what Marco Fusinato has steered himself to do time after time. Wire contributor Byron Coley explained the genius of *Free* when he spoke of the punk desire to break down barriers between performer and audience. He has pointed out that "Fusinato trumped [...] their little hand from the equation, creating a brilliant frisson that obviates the need for all the tired old gesticulation one expects from a 'musical' performance". One might add that he also did it without any security guards whatsoever.

The finished recording is then pressed up as a limited edition single, under the title *Free* – in whatever language is spoken in the country in question – *Free*, *Libero*, *Slobodna*, *Jlyu*. So far nine of the ten are complete. However, Fusinato has noticed that as time goes on, his impromptu performances are being found less and less offensive. The latest even drew complimentary remarks from the involuntary audience. The Situationist élan of the project is thus wearing ever thinner, as it begins to transcend itself through the encroachment of noise improv into the 'mainstream', as represented by the denim-clad denizens of guitar stores worldwide.

His new project is a series of 12" vinyl works which explore the structure of analogue sound recordings to disc as artworks. In three related projects, silent recordings are used as masters for LPs which group the grooves as patterns of lines and blocks of time, rather than structuring them around compositions of sound. The first, called *Q_1 Q_2 Q_3 Q_4* (2003), consists of four LPs of 'nothing' divided into tracks. One has a single track of the 20 minute 'maximum length', one with one minute of silence occupying the full width of the side (therefore 33 revolutions), one

with four equal length tracks occupying the full 20 minutes, and one with ten locked grooves of 'nothing'. A second work from 2004 expands the original four discs with 'remix discs' made by overdubbing the original discs in every possible combination. The results, of course, are not silent; they contain accidental surface and playback noise. In unpredictable and variable quantities. The appeal lies in the conceptual 'emptying' of content from a cultural medium, leaving only the 'container', visible for what it really is.

The second, *Q_King Variations*, consists of 100 records custom cut by Peter King of King Records Worldwide, New Zealand's inventor of the lathe-cut polycarbonate disc. These were based on ten drawings of what Fusinato describes as "extreme grooves", or unplayable and technically unfeasible groove alignments including off-centre grooves, overlaid lock-grooves and even non-circular or elliptical grooves, which King used as templates to cut multiple loops of 'nothing', which play randomly as the needle tracks in a non-linear way through the crossed grooves, generating as it goes a kind of analogue glitch track, crossed with a deconstructed scratch break consisting only of surface noise as it goes.

The final part of the trilogy consists of an edition of four different silent records with groove patterns based on more of Fusinato's drawings of 'imaginary', or unplayable records, which are designed to defeat our expectations of what a record is. This edition is called *Q_Synaesthesia Editions* and is being released on Melbourne imprint Synaesthesia. This is the 'commercial' realisation of the earlier gallery based works, which Fusinato hopes will provide the basis for a series of DJ sets by invited turntablists, all using the silent and technically 'unfeasible' records, which can in turn be documented as further performance pieces.

With his love of recorded sound in all its forms, and his restless experimental art practice ramping up its rate of output with each passing year, we can be sure that there will be plenty more interventions from Fusinato's studio. □ The four limited edition discs comprising *Q_Synaesthesia Editions* are out now on Synaesthesia: www.synaesthesia.com



Left: Still from Marvin Ayres and Pete Gomes' *Scope*. Right: Masaki Bathin in Ghost's *Metamorphosis*

MARVIN AYRES & PETE GOMES
SENSORY: COLLABORATIONS
 1999-2002

BURNING SHED DVD
 BY BRIAN MARLEY

Installation art made to look good when projected onto a large screen can lose impact when the image is shrunk to the size of a TV set. If *Cycle*, the second of this DVD's three pieces, suffers to some degree from having been scaled down, the others make the transition without loss. In *Cycle*, Pete Gomes's freely evolving, mandala-like, computer-generated images are superimposed over evocatively tracked footage of flowering shrubs and shuffled staccato shots of bare earth. To the chunky strains of Marvin Ayres's electronics (made from the stretched harmonics of chords played on two pianos, one of them apparently out of tune), the images gradually return to a point not too distant from where they began.

In *Sensory*, short-lived rags and fractured spirals of purple-blue and green smoke draw the viewer ever deeper into a black void. Here Ayres's minimalist music derives from his principal instruments, electric cello and viola, and its consonant materials approach resolution time and again without quite managing to settle there.

The DVD's longest piece, *Scope*, consists of a heavily filtered London cityscape inched in a jittery manner from right to left past the viewer

while washes of color sweep from foreground to background and back again, giving London the look of an abandoned city. Derived from a single volk, Ayres's music lapses into near silence in places as it goes through several distinct phases. It evokes a range of emotions that have no direct correspondence with the images, and the compound effect is ultimately unsettling.

FAUST
FAUST IMPRESSIONS
 ZICK ZACK HIT THING DVD
 BY KEITH MOLINE

There's a point halfway through Faust's 12-minute fuzz epic "Krautrock" that constitutes one of the great moments in recorded music. The mendacious, bloated distortion set up by the guitars and electronics is suddenly clawed apart by Zappi Diermaier's massive, thrashing drumbeat, the music wobbling uncertainly for a few moments until the rhythm is established. It's a perfect example of the ragged fallibility that humanizes Faust's work, and it's the aspect of their aesthetic that Diermaier seizes on with his 11 video analogues of tracks, some previously unreleased, culled from various points in their long history.

Great care has been taken with the musical preparation, adding new elements to classic tracks like "So Far" and "It's A Rainy Day, Sunshine Girl," but these are restricted to the outer reaches of the sound and spectrum, leaving the

original music intact. Conversely, sounds from their early years in their communal studio at Wirmme have been added to more recent material, making for a cohesive body of work despite its content spanning three decades.

Diermaier's visual work is fearlessly literal. Because "Rainy Day" reminds him of the Wümm river when it was recorded, he offers seven minutes of snow footage. In a sly reference to the controversial implications of the term Krautrock, he reclaims the word by presenting the back of the same name as a "hatch patch of sores just like sauerkraut." The editing and image processing seem at first to be simplistic and intrusive, but somehow it works remarkably well. There's a childlike tastelessness to the visuals that connects perfectly with Faust's inchoate sonic aesthetic. Also included is a 30-minute CD leader for Diermaier's next DVD / Span, featuring evocative steel recordings overlaid with his ferocious percussion. Interesting enough, but trying to match the power of "Krautrock" is an unenviable task.

GHOST
METAMORPHOSIS
 DRAG CITY DVD + CD
 BY DAVID KEENAN

With the sheer volume of swanky multimedia packages coming out now, you have to wonder if anyone's actually content only to listen to music any more. A fair minor gripe, admittedly, and it

fails to gleam before the deluge of high quality visuals coming out of the Japanese underground, such as this era-defining package from Tokyo addi rock group Ghost, which tracks their massive stylistic shifts from 1984 to the present.

Its combination of rare live footage, outtakes from recording sessions, spontaneous street jams and on-the-road footage significantly adds to your overall appreciation of Ghost's guerrilla approach. The early material is particularly revealing, documenting their heretofore unknown (to most Western ears, at least) roots in noise/improv, when Toshi "Giant" Takizawa's horn and percussion and Masaki Bathin's guitar stoked a spontaneous ferocity that's easily the match of Arthur Doyle and Radolph Grey's Blue Humans. It isn't until about 1993 that the Ghost sound as such really falls into place. Some of the best sequences come from this era, namely the film shot at Waseda Salvation Church and Sanyo Temple. The latter occasion supplied some of the material for Ghost's live PSF album, *Temple Stone*. A fabulously gory sense of ceremony defines much of this footage, with Kazuo Dingo blasting away on the tube of a vacuum cleaner like it's a ceremonial Tibetan horn. Meanwhile, Bathin, silhouetted by candles, makes with weird English lyrics that sound like phrasebook grammar put to the service of LSD evangelism. Other highlights include a garish wandering set from Tokyo in 1995 and a hard rocking show from Tokyo's Star



Left: Concert posters from *Off The Wall*. Right: Dancer Junko Wada

Pine's Cafe last year, featuring guitarist Michio Kuwahara. The set comes with a fully annotated booklet and a CD of unreleased tracks from the 1960s, including a 32 minute blowout on "Children Of The Earth" and a rejected 1968 studio recording of their regular set closer, "Blood Red River".

OFF THE WALL: PSYCHEDELIC ROCK POSTERS FROM SAN FRANCISCO

AMELIE GASTAUT & JEAN-PIERRE CROQUI
THAMES & HUDSON POK £16.95
BY ANDY TAY

The counterculture peaked between 1966 and 1968 in San Francisco's Haight-Ashbury district when the tribes of the hip and curious were drawn by the pursuit of love, freedom and sensation. The result was a huge surge in the young population of the city – in 1966 alone, the Haight neighbourhood leapt from 700 to 10,000 – and their thirst for music and drugs fed a roaring creative for three vibrant years.

Concerts, gatherings and happenings became a focal point for a scene that emphasised community. News of these events needed a suitable broadcast medium, and what followed was an unprecedented explosion of a new form of extraordinarily innovative concert posters. Initially sprayed across the streets and then in store windows, the psychedelic imagery's gaudy popularity became evident when they started to vanish from the telegraph poles. At first they were given away free at the final night of each week's show at the San Francisco rock venue, the Fillmore, but eventually second and third printings went up on sale after the event.

The artists, often heads themselves, were fully immersed in the scene and so understood their audience perfectly. Their intent was to wilyly

accentuate the distance between the hip scene and the straight society. Many posters required prolonged contemplation. Indeed, the 'slow poster' was best appreciated in an 'enhanced' sensory state, which helped the message to sink in more effectively. All sorts of accepted graphic rules were broken: vivid colour contrasts emphasised, set typographic conventions rejected, hand lettering dominated, text and image were broken down and regularly blended together. The clarity of the information was relegated in importance, sometimes bordering on illegibility. Victor Moseca's 1967 *Wafurth's Motion*, for a Family Dog concert, embraces Lynch's *Apples and Orbs* as its basis, only to tentatively seek everything by slipping in some cosmic fish, melting the text and cranking up the colours.

Off The Wall is a succinct collection that beautifully reproduces some of the best work of this era, illustrating how poster artists gleefully plundered Art Nouveau, Op Art, collage, Victorian miscellany, historical photography, esoteric Eastern art, religious iconography and children's books. Croqui identifies these posters as an "intermediary artform", uniquely blending high and low culture. The psychedelic era was perhaps the first time that advertising was viewed as art.

VERSCHWENDE DEINE JUGEND

JÜRGEN TIEBEL & SIGRID HARDER 2006, 47 MIN BY GEMTA DAWL

Jürgen Tiegel took the title for his excellent 2001 history book of German punk (and after) from the pulse-pounding DAF track, 'Verschwende Deine Jugend' ("Waste Your Youth"). Regrettably it has yet to be translated into English, but in Germany, the book is so popular that it has been made into both a feature film and this documentary, which had its world premiere in

front of packed audiences at the recent 55th Berlin Film Festival.

Like the book, it tells the intertwined stories of such groups as DAF, Malena, Einstürzende Neubauten, Fehlfarben and SYPH. A series of some 400 stills runs in the foreground, while interviews with the protagonists roll in the background. At first it runs like a low budget slideshow, but its bare minimalism (it was "produced with Macromedia Flash") is refreshing. The film examines how Germany adopted UK punk's spirit and DIY ethos to its own ends: Blau Bagdad was lyrical about Berlin's squating culture, and Malalai's Gudrun Gut recalls playing a sylphonone onstage, because she thought it was punk rock to play a handheld keyboard with a pen. In one of the film's most hilarious if harrowing passages, DAF vocalist Gabi Delgado recalls his honor at a show attended entirely by skinheads, when they played their 'controversial' hit, 'Der Mussolini', only for this audience to take it at face value.

JUNKO WADA: CHIDORI AKINBODE AKINBIYI & GERHARD KASSNER

HAUS DER KULTUREN DER WEIßEDITION AB FISCHER HÖR - DVD EUR 30

BY SIMA KOPF

Japanese dancer Junko Wada and Berlin go back a long way – she had performed in the city often over 10 years before she moved there at the start of the new millennium. When it dawned on her that she'd been a resident for two years and still didn't really know Berlin at all, she launched herself into a year-long performance project designed to help her get to know it better. *Process Vol 2 - Reflection-Point And Line Berlin* involved Wada lighting out to map the city with a series of line and run pieces improvised before baffled or bemused passers by in art spaces and public

places, ranging from the oyster bar in the department store Kaufhof to Schlachsee beach. Her performances were documented, in black and white and colour respectively, by photographers Akinbode Akinbiyi and Gerhard Kassner.

The picture sequence illustrating a ride down the city's most popular tourist route, Bus 100 to Alexanderplatz, best epitomises this fabulously playful undertaking. Yet you Wada boarding the bus accompanied by friends including sound artists Hans Peter Kuhn, Christine Kuisch, Tilly Fox, Felix Hess, and Wada's former husband Axel Suzuki at the Victory Column, she and Suzuki improvise a dance with red and green ribbons before spectators wearing 3D glasses. In an underpass, Fox and Hess stand back to back on a drawing of John Cage's ears marking a soundpoint designated by Suzuki in 1996. At Potsdamer Platz, Wada and artist Eva-Maria Schön climax their performance of *Xarte (Art)* by serving cake. Later, by the river near the cathedral, Wada and Suzuki, blessing through a clown horn, reprise their weary erotic dance as a pleasure boat cruises by. 'Junko Wada and I gifted tourists with boisterous amusement', remarks a jocular Suzuki.

Over the course of the project, Wada's dancing draws lines across the city, connecting its distant points, disciplines and artists – most of whom provide the book with commentary. At Schlachsee beach she performs inside a Kuhn soundfield, she's photographed improvising dances with vocalist Ute Westermann at Ullrichstrasse subway station, and drummers Sven Ake Johansson and David Moss, at the Club Of Polish Failures and the Parochial Church respectively. The book is appended with earlier events, like Wada unravelling a performance out of keeping a diary at globe MUSIK record shop. Sound aside, the DVD in truth adds little to the book's photos, which picture Wada's movements like knots unravelling in the flow of time. □

The Inner Sleeve

Artwork selected this month by James Goggin



RIDE NOWHERE

CREATOR 1999

WWE BY WARREN BOLSTER

Ride's 1990 debut *Nowhere and My Bloody Valentine's Loveless* were the first two albums I bought upon arrival in Wales after moving from New Zealand. We moved to Cardiff in 1991 (one of around eight or nine businesses my family lived in around the world), so I was a year late picking up the album, but Ride seemed like an

appropriate English continuation of the Flying Nun school of noisy, melancholic, melodic pop I'd got into during the two years I lived in NZ.

I had already decided to become a graphic designer by the time I joined the Cardiff south-form art class halfway through the year, and the original reason I bought *Nowhere* was for the cover: a large 12" sleeve adorned only with a photograph of a wave in the middle of the ocean. The wave was a connection back to NZ. Raglan, a coastal town near where we lived, is world

famous for its consistent left-hand break, and one of my favourite T-shirts of that time was for a local surfboard company which had accidentally printed the break back to front, the waves going the wrong way.

I've always liked the idea of records (and books, for that matter) eschewing typography for an image strong enough alone to convey a sense of the content within, and even though earlier pressings of the sleeve were named by superfluous blind-embossing of the group name

and title over the wave, the cleaner later version, with details on the spine only, is a classic. My version had a black RIDE sticker on the front, but apart from that and production/distribution information, details are kept to a minimum: so much so that I still can't work out who actually designed it. Renowned US surf photographer and *envelope* Skateboarder editor Warren Bolster is given the only credit – not for the photography, but for the wave. ☐ James Goggin is The Wire's new art director

Go To:

Go to: favourite **Ubuweb** (www.ubu.com), that enormous archive of sound artefacts, has just added another level of content to their online treasure trove. Ubuweb Films is a new section which currently contains 37 Fluxus shorts, compiled in the 60s by Fluxus founder George Maciunas, and presented in MPEG format. In addition, you can find Kenneth Anger's *Kustom Kar Commandos* (1965) and *Puce Moment* (1949); Guy Debord's *The Society Of The Spectacle* (1973); an extract from Robert Rauschenberg's *Losium* (1967); *Normal Love* (1963) by Jack Smith; and even the performance of Cage's "432" from 2004 at London's Barbican. Other new content here is eight versions of Kurt Schwitters's *Unsortale* (1922-32) – including his original plus versions by Jaap Blonk, Sebastian Lespessade, Adachi Tetsumi, Linerakulopus, Christopher Butterfield and others – Mick Jagger's soundtrack to Anger's *Invocation Of My Demon Brother*; Euphonia Ionesco reading from his work from the 60s; and People Like Us's DJ set from Christian Marclay's *Sounds Of Christmas* at Tate

Modern last December.

London based sound and technology organisation **Sonic Arts Network** (www.sonicartsnetwork.org) has initiated an educational project called **Sonic Postcards** (www.sonicpostcards.org). Armed at nine to 14 year olds, the project involves schools arranging talks with sound artists and later handing over recording equipment for them to make their own sonic map of the immediate local area. The site includes various recordings and schools, and teachers interested in taking part in the project should make contact with SAN.

"Metal was born in 1923 and we have the proof!" states **12 Ton Method** (www.12tonmethod.com), a site set up by "the Spirit Of Arnold Schoenberg", who insists that he is the godfather of Metal. A group of musicians calling themselves The Emancipation Of Dissonance spend their time making 12-tone Metal versions of Liszt, Beethoven and more. The curious can hear the results as MP3s on their site.

Slence Radio (www.slenceradio.org) is a new Brussels based listening space dedicated to contemporary radio art. Although much of the work is in French, there are pieces by such artists as Krut Aferman, Jacques Focchia, DJ Elephant Power, Noctes Husquet, Sarah Washington, Oliver Meys and others.

"Obviously the album's title is a play on the titles of the paintings and the band's name, but it may also suggest that the band and other artists are not unlike nurses", states a review of *Sonic Youth's Sonic Nurse* published on the **Centre For Nursing Advocacy's** Website (www.nursingadvocacy.org/media/music/sonic_nurse.html). The writer, Nursing Editor Harry Jacobs Summers, has spent much time with the recording analysing the lyrics, and ultimately awarded it three stars in the "Nursing Rating" and another three in the "Arts & Rating", before concluding that "nurses could do worse than to take the album's title to heart, and make some noise." Let's hope the NHS is listening.

ANNE HILDE NESST



On Location

Live and kicking: festivals, concerts, events in the flesh



PHOTOS: DOUGLAS CHASE



Opposite page (clockwise from top): Ikuo Mori & Zeena Parkins, Matmos's live speaking, Jonny Greenwood. This page: Tony Allen

ETHER FESTIVAL LONDON SOUTH BANK CENTRE UK

BY KEITH MOLLIN

"Where worlds collide" is the Ether Festival's enticingly dramatic tagline, an optimistic remit being to produce excitement from the clash of disparate creative approaches and disciplines. There is plenty on this year's bill to stimulate the senses, though whether as agenda as nebulous as that suggested by the event's name can accommodate a cohesive season of performances is a debatable point.

Certainly 'focus' is a word that resonates strongly through the opening night. Virtually every musical warden with an E profile London postcode has been involved with festival operators they Came From the Stars I Saw There at some point in the last five or six years, your correspondent included. Tonight, despite their evident attempt to focus their Faustian-bubblegum sprawl, they remain as endearingly symbolic as ever, chucking bucketsloads of ludicrously kaleidoscopic ideas at the walls of the Queen Elizabeth Hall until eventually something starts to sink. Ghibber is in comparison funnily concentrated, mining a single seam with impressively grim determination. A relaxed onstage demeanor cannot mask the egomaniacal bitterness of Colin Newman's vocals or the terse punch of Niala Spagetti's dub bass. Gutterin' Robin Hyrbard is still considerably more awkward on his instrument than he is behind a laptop, but his wry scowl is far more convincing than it was in the group's early performances. He even breaks a string — though he blows his moment in the rock 'n' roll way somewhat by having to ask "Uncle Colin" to tune his replacement guitar.

Instantly, perhaps because of their place on a vaguely kitsch-themed bill, their music takes on a different character tonight, and the loosely implied connections between their updated version of Chaz Missing-are Wire and the glitter end of Wauprock are made explicit.

Gibber's music is so lightly focused on its core elements that it develops a dynamic of tension and release by the very fact that there is no tension and release, an approach mastered by Düsseldorf heroes Neel on pieces like "Für Immer" and "E-Musik". Neu's Michael Rother duly headlines the first night in a duo with Dieter Moebius of Cluster (a formation that the punters at the bar were inevitably labelling "nearby-Harmonia"). For much of their set the music does indeed possess the impressionistic, fuzzy warmth of 1974's *Musik Von Harmonia* — spring-forged rhythms, FX wishes and asymmetrical synthesizer sequences. Occasionally, though, the fog clears and Rother's gonk pop-rock guitar looms into right-onish full-focus. It's like discovering that the pleasantly abstract design you've been admiring is actually a close shot of your mindlessly grinding great aunt. Luckily each "Why, Miss Jones, you're hideous!" moment is quickly submerged in another gaseous cloud of electronics. Proof that sometimes a lack of focus is no bad thing.

As a bill, the following evening's pairing of UK rap megastar Dizee Razzal and Afrobeat percussion legend Tony Allen simply doesn't work. Allen is a mesmerizing drummer, his kit seeming to glow and pulse like a cartoon octopus under his benign caress. A servocratically lithe group fills in the gaps, but it's the drummer who commands the attention throughout. A disappointingly short set, Allen, along with most of the audience, doesn't appear to know why he's here tonight. Parallels might be drawn between his Fela Kuti-ish "Don't Take My Kindness For Weakness" and Dizze's "Inspect Me", but the only explicit connection between the two performers is their polyrhythmic command, Allen's loose and sloppy, Dizze's brittle and uptight. The mark of the Royal Festival Hall's acoustic blurs the edge of Dizze's beats and muffle the dry, panned wit of his lyrics. What's left may not actually be hollow bombast, but it sure starts to sound like it. Had Allen been invited to sit in, sparks might have flown.

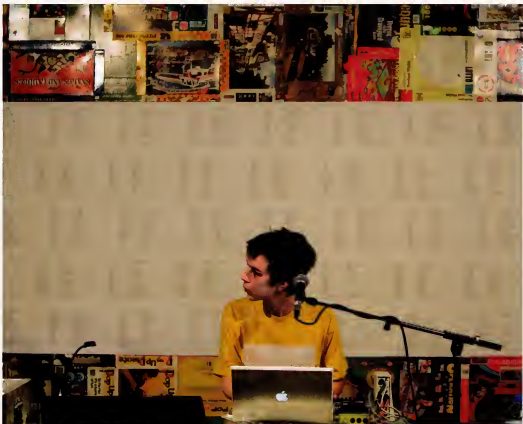
Gutting their headline set on day three off to a promising start with some live speaking, Matmos proceed to charm the pants off the audience as well with a sparkling performance. Each piece builds patiently from Drew Darrie's live sampling of Martin Schmidt's manipulated objects (balkers, beer cans, metal objects), rounded out gradually by guest Jay Lesser's guitar and electronics. Such is the relaxed, confident charm of the performers that the occasional video projections feel unnecessary, even distracting. Funds may sneer at the transparency of their methods and simplicity of their compositional approach, but the infectious majesty of the resulting music banishes any notions that this is a one-gimmick band. Accessibility is often viewed with suspicion, but Matmos connect with a wider audience purely because they're great. Earlier, Charlemagne Palestine enchants with a brief but engaging 'nema' of the compositional preoccupations that have kept him at the forefront of minimalist music making for three decades. Adding waves of pummelled piano and his keening, boyish wail to a backdrop of electronically generated drones, Palestine is part grizzly port teddy bear, but wholly himself, chatting amiably to the front row of the Purcell Room even as the music is stretched to full tension.

Meanwhile Cydste provide foyer ambience, though as one particularly vicious blast of noise erupts from the PA and a number of alarmed punters spit their drinks, it becomes clear that this is no live lounge. Despite others warring in their more extremist tendencies, their internal sets possess the same ominous depth as their recent Huse With Wound collaborations. In the Queen Elizabeth Hall, harpist Zeena Parkins (a co-member with Matmos of Björk's touring group) and Ikuo Mori on laptop struggle at first to cleave some room for manoeuvre in the hall's viscous acoustic. Paring down their approach rears immediate doberies: Mori starts to concentrate on a series of little sounds that recall her pioneering work on drum machines, while Parkins begins to explore various

techniques and textures in greater depth than her initial restlessness has allowed. A passage of looped, other-like tones is particularly beautiful. A luminous improvisation with Matmos, at times reminiscent David Tudor's *Akmalforest*, rounds off a superb evening.

As with the last two Ether festivals, the final show sees the enterprising London Sinifonietta deliver a stimulating collaborative programme, this time in partnership with Jonny Greenwood. The Radiohead guitarist's own compositions *Smear* and *Phono For Children* contain stretches of extremely expressive music, and it is the self-effacing Greenwood credit that the rest of the evening spotlights the work of composers whose influence on his pieces is apparent. Thus the microtonal explorations of *Phono For Children* echo the orating string textures of Ligeti's *Awareness*, and Messiaen's ondes Martinet sonnet *La Fête Des Belles Eaux* has clearly inspired the swooping melodic flourishes of *Smear*, played on the same analog instrument. An arrangement of the same Radiohead song, "Aegeus", goes even further by being scored for no less than seven of them, and also benefits from a poised vocal performance by Thom Yorke, sounding uncannily like The Blue Nile's Paul Buchanan.

The evening lessens focus slightly with an intermittent selection of Dufloxx minutiae and Paridreck's Capivore For Dose And Strings, which though beautifully performed, say more about Greenwood's impossible taste than offering further insight into his colloquial approach. On to the presentations of Arabic music, featuring members of The Hazazeth Ensemble and singer Lubna Sulaimi giving a sublime reading of "Enta Omri", a wistful epic first performed by Dum Kalthoun. An arrangement of Radiohead's "Where Bluebirds Fly" sees Greenwood trying either heavilyhandedly to incorporate these elements into his work, and for once the sureness of touch that has been a mark of his other contributions eludes him. But that's Ether: worlds collide, shit happens, but more often, magic. □



Leafcutter John at Toroko Takahashi's Serpentine exhibition

THE LEAFCUTTER JOHN ORCHESTRA SERPENTINE GALLERY LONDON

BY OLIVE BELL

A crazy tangle of little primary school chairs rises up to the ceiling, as if a wave of furniture is crashing against the gallery wall. Below, 1,000 board games are laid out in a Lewis Carroll-style landscape garden, and a mulch of obsolete radios, computers and toys mumble quietly to each other. Toroko Takahashi's installation at the Serpentine Gallery is a painstaking but playful grading and display of a mountain of discarded junk. Part of its emotional impact is knowing that each element once held intense meaning and value, but now it's all been chucked out.

The Leafcutter John Orchestra present a spontaneous musical response to Takahashi's show. Three percussionists, armed with mallets

and microphones, prowl through three gallery rooms, coaxing sound from objects. It's all cabled back to Leafcutter John himself for live processing and mixing. Seb Rochford of Polar Bear, Melissa Agate (aka sarso-dro) and Sebastian Lowndes-Williams are the prowlers, and the capacity crowd in the front gallery watches their activity on video screens.

At first the atmosphere is like a children's party, as we all squash down onto the floor, and fountains attached to hoisipoops are handed out. We are invited to read tongue twisters into the funnels, and an eight year old's clear enunciation of "a pleasant pleasant plucker" is fed into Leafcutter John's system for some digital jiggery-pokery. This is fun, and has the virtue of demonstrating in simple form the process by which the whole piece will be made. The opaque mystery of the laptop is thankfully exposed.

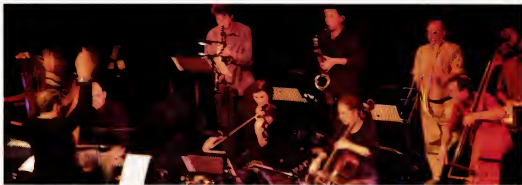
John makes a convincing party magician, but

then we move on from the giggling to the more serious shores of electronic processing. In fact the set-up is pretty complex, both for the performers and the audience. Three musicians are simultaneously sending unpredictable performances to John, who has to create the overall sound picture on the fly. Restraint is clearly part of the game plan, so we get the tootsie tooting of an old gas cylinder or a red alarm bell, rather than a dazzling display of stickamanehlo. Agate finds a plywood school chair is a good instrument, with a wide range of pitches. John shows great control, never letting the material slide into chaotic sonic soup, but there's a feeling that a battle with the technology is going on. All the understatement, and an austere avoidance of rhythm, leads us for a while into a chilly and over-familiar 'experimental music' wasteland, a sonata of hard knocks. Meanwhile for the audience the challenge is whether we can really listen, in an

environment that bursts at the seams with visual information.

Suddenly the system overloads, and a subsonic whoosh escapes from the PA like a whale coming up for air. It's scary, but one possible direction – and as a baby bursts into tears and a couple make for the exit, it's clear this was a temporary slip-up.

The performers persevere, and eventually everything comes into focus. A beautifully layered passage of warm, gurgling tones sits across a loop from one of Takahashi's toys. Long, breathy sung notes add a calm, droning pattern, and the tongue twisters swirl back into the picture to close the piece. The prolonged applause confirms that, while not a 100 per cent success, risks have been taken, and we've all been on a strange journey of genuine experiment and considerable reward in this attempt to translate Takahashi's exhibition into sound. □



Steve Beresford directs and interprets Christian Marclay's *Graffiti Composition*

**CHRISTIAN MARCLAY/
STEVE BERESFORD**
LONDON LSO ST LUKE'S
UK

BY PHIL ENGLAND

As an adjunct to the retrospective of Christian Marclay's visual art, the Barbican Centre premiered an evening comprising the UK premiere of two Marclay compositions. *Tabula Rasa* featured Marclay in his most well-known role as a manipulator of multiple turntables, tapping them, keeping them with the help of tiny slides, scratching and dragging the arm woundingly across the vinyl surface – all techniques that have become the gestural

currency of vinyl abuse on the world over.

This composition, however, adds a conceptual twist. Marclay starts off with three empty decks and makes sound using the machines alone. His collaborator, Flo Kaufmann, records and later cuts a 7" single of these sounds and hands it back to Marclay to play with. This circular process continues throughout the performance.

The absence of musical source material means Marclay is operating under severe limitations and is performing a rather highwire act. Marclay, though, looks laid back – almost lachrymose. He realises the futility in trying to build a musical structure, and goes instead for textures and the layering of chaotic sound events. The result

sounds like a 16-bit reproduction of an early electroacoustic work that slowly builds in tempo and complexity. It teeters between the viscerally thrilling and the eerily empty, and ends rather arbitrarily.

Graffiti Composition is Marclay's conceptual art piece involving large blank sheets of music pasted like flyposters around the walls of Berlin. The accumulated dirt and decay, notation and graffiti tagging by members of the public all combine in a chance score. As an idea it is most elegant – how it sounds in practice is entirely down to how these 'scores' are interpreted. On this occasion, the imaginative flair of the musical director Steve Beresford and his ten piece

ensemble of improvisers brought the piece to life in a spacious, vital yet subtly arranged way. Each instrumentalist was given two pages of the score, allowing Beresford to conduct a sequential series of concertos.

Each section's interpretation was set in spontaneously arranged small groupings, with Beresford pulling people in and out, providing a constantly shifting environment. This was neither a free for all improvising blowout, nor a Cage-like chance composition which mitigates against creative input from performers, but a finely arranged work with creative input from all concerned with a refined and gritty, elevating musicality. □

TUXEDOMOON
MADRID COLEGIO MAYOR SAN
JUAN EVANGELISTA

SPAIN

BY JOHN GILL

Reinited, lean, muscular, strappy and cruising for a bruising, *Tuxedomoon* is a monstrous and beautiful thing to behold. Sneak into their soundcheck and you'll see what makes this group unique. Dreamless, they are anchored by the seismic bass of the Buddha-like Peter Príncipe. Flamingo violinist, guitarist and string leader Reininger tunes up, toying with

fragments of Casini's "Sunshine Of Your Love" and The Kingmen's "Lava Love". Rockstar, pianist and fellow singer Steven Brown dips into Coltrane's version of "My Favorite Things" and other besides. Horn player Luc Van Leesthout just blows a gale and tinkers with his harmonica. Visual artist George Kalantaris manipulates live video of the musicians and Pollock-like abstractions on a large screen.

Brown is exquisitely melancholy on grand piano, and inaccessibly elegant as his roods. When he and Reininger duet on vocals, Blaize has great fun playing the schmaltzy crooner, while Brown

summons up an icy dread. Reininger is the Sinatra to Brown's Jim Morrison and, in a series, the Twain to his Poe. Van Leesthout's horns are an elemental force with echoes of Miles's mule.

Pop all these into a particle accelerator with added electronics and treatments – Blaize singing through his milked-up violin, making space station alarm noises with his foot pedals, or letting rip with apocalyptic jackhammer sequences ("Diano Di Un'Epigasta") – and you get the quantum physics that is a *Tuxedomoon* gig. This comeback tour is demarcated by 2004's ravishing release *Cabin In The Sky*, although

there is a brace of favourites: "The Waltz" off *Holy News*, and the title track from *Dense*.

There are moments of quiet beauty, not least Brown's languid piano and soul reeds, and at moments when Van Leesthout's harmonica and Reininger's violin produce mutant bluesgrass, but there are also sonic baroque that can pin you to the wall. I don't remember a *Tuxedomoon* concert this raw and visceral, not least the full on Stratusfunk funk of "Luther Blisset" – imagine Miles Davis and Wayne Shorter jamming with A Certain Ratio with some Charles Iles-like intertextuality at work. □

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the chemical brothers, lcd soundsystem, roisin murphy, subtle, m.i.a., le tigre, de la soul, the durutti column, cut chemist, mu, the soft pink truth, the battles, miss kittin, mouse on mars, soulwax, sólo los solo, world's end girlfriend, jeff mills, radian, dj yoda, laurent garnier - cinemix, jamie lidell, joris voorn, richie hawtin, atom tm vs towa tei, noah23, ada, 2 many dj's, goodiepal, ellen allien, james murphy, matthew herbert - plat du jour, fergie, mathew jonson, skoltz_kolgen, my robot friend, the beautiful people, hood, to rococo rot, alex attias, afra, rei harakami & shiro takatani, cuisine concrète + jordi vilà, khonnor, efterklang, dj t, hurtmold + rob mazurek, mark one + virus syndicate, 2020 soundsystem, mocky, hot chip, duplex aka edan & insight...

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- FRI 28/04** **DEATH IN JUNE**
For Greater Good - Pathetic
- SA 30/04** **COR FUHLER & ORKESTRA**
- THU 05/05** **HENRY GRIMES TRIO** feat. Marilyn Crispell & Andrew Cyrille
- SU 16/05** **DTOMD YOSHINDE SEPTET - The Necka**
- TUE 17/05** **MIKE STERN QUARTET**
- FRI 10/06** **FM EINHEIT - Christian Wolz**

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Rotten Sound - Hemorrhage - Sublim - Leag Tch'n - Tpop
- WED 04/05** **ADMIRAL FREEBEE - tuchBONE**
- SU 06/05** *Belgian Rootsnight 7:*
THE FABULOUS THUNDERBIRDS
T99 - Big Dave - Skenny McDee & His Mayhem Makere
Dobro Jean
- FRI 13/05** **JDN OLIVA's Pain (Savotage) - Imperia**
- FRI 20/05** **UFO - The Lizards**

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Friday 20 May

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My Cat Is An Alien
Kazuo Imai
Luc Ferrari + Erik M
Takehisa Kosugi

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Tue 24	London Irish Centre	Thu 2	Bristol Pines & Firkin
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Thu 26	Sheffielder Rock Cafe	Sat 4	Portsmouth Wedgewood Rooms
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21.05	Fribourg	FRI-SOM
22.05	Frankfurt	Wassenturm
24.05	London	Royal Festival Hall
26.05	Heidelberg	Kernstbahnhof
28.05	Barcelona	Primavera Festival

SAM PREKOP

26.04	London	Bush Hall w/ full band
27.04	Glasgow	Reefrow Ferry w/ Archer Prewitt
28.04	Edinburgh	The Venue w/ Archer Prewitt
29.04	Oslo	80a
01.05	Colmar	Grillen
02.05	Basel	Mischtechnik
03.05	Stuttgart	Schocken
04.05	Paris	La Guinguette Piratée
06.05	Offenbach	Hafen 2
07.05	Rotterdam	Rotown
09.05	Hamburg	Tanzhalle
10.05	Berlin	Knaack
11.05	Osnabrück	Star Club
12.05	München	Grangshous

ARCHER PREWITT

16.05	London	ICA w/ Brother Daveson
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ADULT.

10.06	Barcelona	The Left
17.06	Liverpool	The Academy
18.06	Leeds	The Faversham
18.06	London	TSA
21.06	Amsterdam	Paradiso
22.06	Paris	Impitoye
24.06	Gene	Culture Club
25.06	Birmingham	The Custard Factory

For additional dates TSC go to
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May 6th, Bristol at the Crypt of Saint Paul
May 7th, Wigan at the Tavern
May 8th, Glasgow at Stereo
May 9th, Edinburgh at Subway
May 10th, Leeds at Cardigan Arms
May 11th, Stockton on Tees at the Georgian Theatre
May 12th, Nottingham at Social
May 14th, London at Rough Trade (instore/day)
May 14th, London at Upstairs at the Garage (night)

www.upsettherhythm.co.uk
www.deathsentencepanda.com

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Sun 29 EDINBURGH,
THE SUBWAY +

Mon 30 HULL,
THE ADELPHI

Tue 31 MANCHESTER,
THE UNICORN

June

Wed 01 OXFORD,
THE WHEATSHEAF

Thu 02 COVENTRY,
THE TIN ANGEL

Sat 04 BRISTOL,
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Sun 05 BRIGHTON,
HAMBURY BALLROOM +

Mon 06 NORWICH,
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Out There

This month's selected festivals, live events, clubs and broadcasts. Send info to *The Wire*, 2nd Floor East, 88-94 Wentworth Street, London E1 7SA, UK Fax +44 (0)20 7422 5011, listings@thewire.co.uk. Compiled by Phil England



Left to right: Yasunao Tone at Cut And Splice, Deathprod at Le Weekend, Jendek at Museo Lovara's Field Companion

UK festivals

BATH INTERNATIONAL MUSIC FESTIVAL

BATH
Classical, jazz and World Musics over a two week period including Pia Sarkerhel & Anish Mukherji, Rhythms Of Shakti, Kala Ramnath & Yogesh Seena, Misha Mengelberg, Django Bates's Human Chen, James MacMillan, London Sinfonietta performing a new collaborative work by Gavin Bryars and Hariri Kureishi, and more. Both venues venues, 20 May-5 June, www.bathmusic.org.uk

BRIGHTON FESTIVAL

BRIGHTON
Three weeks of cultural activities including concerts by Tomorrow's Warriors, Slans Of Madagascara, The Flaps, Budd Supri, Delebrish Matschuray, Aloysius Infinita, The Necks, Edgum Swensen Inc, Harold Budd with Bill Nelson, John Fox, Jah Wobble with Robin Guthrie, Christy Moore and many others. Brighton venues venues, 7-29 May, www.brighton-festival.org.uk

CHELTENHAM JAZZ FESTIVAL

CHELTENHAM
West Country jazz festival continues with Dmetri Colman's two bass quartet, Ken Vandermark, Jason Yarde, Bobby Previte's Beta Pope's (1 May) and Herbie Hancock Quartet, Bobby Previte & Birmingham Conservations, Byron Waller's Trumpet Kings, Joshua Redman, Ken Vandermark's Free Fall and Bobby Previte's Beta Pope's (2). Cheltenham various venues & series, www.cheltenhamfestivals.org.uk

CUT AND SPICE: DOTS AND LINES

LONDON
Some Arts Network organised festival of electronic music and sound art presented in collaboration with BBC Radio 3 and supported by The Wire. Concerts include Jaap Blank performing Kurt Schwitters' Unsonate (13 May);

Robert Ashley's 1960s work The Wallman for voice, feedback and tape, and Maurizio Kaghi's Acousica for inverted instruments and tape (22); Yasunao Tone and Raster-Noton artists Carster Nozola, Frank Bretschneider and Didi Bender (29), and a collaboration of John Cage's William's Mix for eight tape recorders (3 June). There will be an accompanying exhibition at the Jewood Gallery displaying original prints of Kurt Schwitters' Unsonate as well as works by Fluxus artists, Cage scores, editions of The Source magazine, Raster-Noton's Archiv 1 and Carsten Nozola's wall drawings. An on stage discussion with Yasunao Tone hosted by The Wire also takes place at the Jewood Gallery (28). London USO St Luke's and Jewood Gallery, 14 May-3 June, www.sonicartnetwork.org

FREEDOM OF THE CITY: MAYDAY!

MAYDAY!
Annual free improv festival celebrating home grown talent. The full line up is: Steve Beresford/Joe Williamson/Roger Turner, Sylvia Haller/Caroline Kneibitz/Vernan Weston, Evan Porter/John Edwards/Mark Matthes/Neil Metcalfe/John Ranganath/John Russell and Alan Wilkerson/Phil Dunnay/Mark Sanders (4pm); Jeff Cloke & Tony Moore, Laila Coughlin & Neil Metcalfe, Paul Rutherford/John Edwards/Mark Sanders, London Improvates Deceit and Philip Wachsmann & Kjell Bjorgensen (8pm). London Red Rose Club, 1 May, £7/£5 per concert, £12/£9 both weekends. www.emandisc.co.uk

LE WEEKEND

STIRLING
The Wire continues to support this outdoor music event, now in its eighth year, with a programme co-ordinated by David Kwanan of Volcanic Tongue. The line up includes two groups featuring Sonic Youth members: Thurston Moore's Dream Atmos Unit and Moore and Kim Gordon's Mermaid's Dash. Also appearing are Paul Flaherty & Chris Corsano, Wally Shopko Trio, Kousokuya,

Dread Focle & The Dn, The Flirts, Deathprod, Rude Freno, Otomo Yoshihide's New Jazz Septet, Modchick, Haruka and Sushiro No Fun. The daytime programme includes talks, workshops and DJ sets. Stirling 14/15/16, 26-29 May, £12/£8 per day, £22/£14 two days, £40/£26 festival pass, www.leweekendfestival.com

MAYDAY! MAYDAY!

BRIGHTON
All day space rock, free jazz and electronics event on the south coast put together by CD-R label Superbol! Featuring ex-Cat vocalist Domo Suzuki performing with local musicians, plus New, Scatter, Ian Hillwell, Ashliebe, Burning Idiot Noise and Wireless. Brighton The Engine Room, 1 May, 2pm-late, £7, www.engineersclub.co.uk

MUSIC LOVERS' FIELD COMPANION

GATESHEAD
New three day festival supported by The Wire and featuring a host of international acts ranging from the new wave of free musicians to legends of the avant garde. A four hour set by Japanese improviser Keiji Haino performing on 40 instruments entitled Secret Of Music (20 May); Yabai-theatrical Deceit, My Cat Is An Alien, Tachibana Koushi performing his Catch-Move 05, Luc Ferrari & eRikM (21); and Jendek, Nopenig, Shui Inoue and Kiyoko No Intention (22). A programme of related films will run throughout the festival. Gateshead The Sage, 20-22 May, www.usicoversfield.companion.org

International festivals

DISSONANZE

ITALY
International festival of electronic music and digital art supported by The Wire, featuring Ryoji Ikeda, Thomas Köner, Richie Hawtin, Jamie Lidell, Granular Synthesis and a homage to composer Giacinto Scelsi by Matmos and Alter Ego

Ensemble. Rome Palazzo Del Congresso, 19-21 May, www.dissonanze.it

ESTRELLA DAMM PRIMAVERA SOUND

SPAIN
Eclectic rock and pop festival with Antony and The Johnsons, Brigitte Fontaine, David Thomas & Two Pale Boys, Erase Errata, Gang Of Four, Iggy & The Stooges, Mercury Rev, New Order, Psychic TV, Sonic Youth, Television Personalities, Test Di Light, Tortoise and many others. Barcelona Forum Area, 26-28 May, 85 Euros, www.primaverasound.com

FESTIVAL INTERNATIONAL MUSIC

ACTUELLE VICTORIAVILLE

CANADA
Annual North American new music festival. This year's line up includes Ike Mori & Zeena Parkins, Anthony Braxton & Fred Frith, Wolf Eyes, William Parker Little Huey Drechsel, Peter Brötzmann Chicago Tentet, Sordoms, The New Cline Singers, Kai Kaila & Martin Tétreault, No Neck Buss Band, Double Leopards, Plastic People Of The Universe with The Agon Alkion Unit, Philip Jack & Jaek Schuler, Dream Alkion Unit, Tenko's tempo and many others. Victoriaville various venues, 19-23 May, www.fimavc.ca

IMPROVISED AND OTHERWISE

USA
Three nights of collaborations between music, dance, performance and theatre practitioners. Musicians include Michael Evans, LeDonna Smith, Chad Taylor, Cooper-Moore and Dikjyung Lee. New York Brooklyn BRIC Studio, 5-7 May, 7-11pm, \$30 festival pass, www.improvisedandotherwise.com

MARK 6

GERMANY
Celebration of Berlin's independent electronic artists. Two nights in a three roomed venue with live action from Morgenstern & Lippok, P.N.K., ISAN, Frank Bretschneider, Fene, Portable and others; and DJ sets by Thomas Fehlmann, M.A., Thomas Weidner, Quo & Christine Lang and the labels Shrikatapult, -Scap, Kaniwie Kalk, Cock

Rock Disco and Kitty Yo. See page 5 of this month's issue for details of a special Mase II CD that is available exclusively to The Wire's subscribers. Serin Maria Am Uller, 27-28 May, 9pm, 20/25 Euros, www.marked.de

MUSICA GENERA FESTIVAL POLAND

International electronic music festival in Eastern Europe. Kevin Drumm, Philip Jack, Thomas Lehr, Jérôme Noquet, Pils, Keith Ross, Jonak Scheffer, Kasper T. Topiolu, Ute Volker, Ingar Zach, Laurent Berger, Kar Gyselend, Hecker, Stephan Mathieu, Xavier Gueldred, Robert Frowitzer and others. Szczecin various venues, 27-29 May, www.mwt.art.pl

MUSIQUE INNOVATRICES FRANCE

New and improvised music festival near Lyon with Donald Miller, Otomo Yoshihide, Neal Ensemble, John Tibbary, John Sutter/Jazz Azz, Dörmes/Charles Xavier, and Sophie Agneli & Olivier Benoit. Saint-Etienne Musée de la Mine, 27-29 May, otzito.bea.fr

NATTJAZZ NORWAY

Ten day Norwegian jazz fest with Ken Vandermark/Lasse Marhaug/Paol Nilsson Love, Dargio Bates's Human Chain, Medele Martin Wood, The Thing, Mr. Shell Noz/Denilo, Nio Vakepask, Chacho Valdes Sævi, Tord Gustavsen Trio, Maya Rankin and The Bad Plus. Bergen various venues, 26 May-4 June, www.nattjazz.no

NUITS SONORES FRANCE

Laurent Gaurier, Gail Pall, Riche Hawkins, Mouse Dr Masm, Matthew Herbert, James Chance & The Contortions, A Certain Ratio, Bugge Wesseltoft, François K, Domo Suzuki's Network, Chris Clark, Deo Plan and others. Lyon various venues, 4-8 May, www.nuits-sonores.com

RING RING SERBIA & MONTENEGRO

Fred Frith, Læstas, Ger-Jan Pries, Bertsch, Broke Back & Wadley's No Domo, Em Vito, Crenach & Ostrowski, Schorn & Purkin, Broke Drum

Percussion, Presentacije Radonice, Ostrowski/Crenach/Pries, Enzli, Balkano Vers, Drouper, Moez Saffard Quintet, Soligade D08 & Res, 5-8 & 21-22 May, various venues & prices, ringring.rs

STAZIONE ELETTRONICA ITALY

Five concerts in Florence. Pan Sonic (8 May), Mouse Dr Masm (12), Otomo Yoshihide Jazz Ensemble (18), Radan (21), Fennest & Ensemble Musiques Nouvelles (25), Florence Saxons Leopoldo, 9-30pm, www.musiconcentus.com

ULTRISCHBERGER KALEIDOPHON AUSTRIA

Impov annual featuring Henry Grimes/Marilyn Crispell/Andrew Cyrille, Radan, Gerry Hemingway Quintet, Philip Wachsmann/Michael Buncie/Paul Lytton, Paul Rutherford's RoRoR, Plasmic Quintet, Günter Christmann's Mail D'Acme, Fieldwork, Daniel Studer's Inna, Alexander Von Schlippenbach, Atseler Abstrakt and peotON. Ulrichsberg/Jostental, 5-7 May, www.jostental.at

UNCOOL 2005 SWITZERLAND

Twelfth international Sun Ra convention and festival of interplanetary jazz. The Sun Ra Arkestra under the direction of Marshall Allen perform twice, alongside Egberto Garmes, Stambout Switzerland, Frédéric Le Jannet, Kai Z Rastour Quintet, Staudschewski and others. The concerts are open air and warm waterproof clothes and Alpine shoes are recommended. Pöschach, 5-8 May, www.uncool.ch

Special events

BLUE TEARS PORTUGAL

Installation by Ian Walton, Russell Mills and Mike Fearon combining airt, corrugated metal, film and a 12-speaker projection of environmental recordings. Oporto S10 Espaço Cultural, until 24 May, www.s10.pt

CIRCLE OF SOUND UK

Installations using recycled sounds and recontextualised art works. From sonic arrangers to VLF recordings of electrical storms and circuit-board self-playing keyboards, the exhibition includes works by Kai Bachowski, Magi Hall, Kaffe Matthews, Deformation, Ins Gasells, Sharon Gai & Meah Hosen, Dan Wilson, Del Wrongstep and others. London The Foundry, 3-8 May, Tues-Fri 7-11pm, Sat-Sun 3-11pm, free, 020 7739 6960, www.resonancein.com

BOB COBBING EXHIBITION UK

A celebration of the late concrete performance poet put together by Jennifer Pike and Phil Davenport with a soundtrack compiled by David Top. The event is part of the Bury Fest Festival Bury Art Gallery & Museum, until 22 May, www.testfestival.com

CROSSED CIRCUITS USA

Exhibition of works that combine the visual arts with sound in a show loosely based around the theme of synaesthesia. There will also be a headphone listening station featuring works from Free 103.9 transmission artists including Scanner, Michelle Naege, Tom Roe, Ben Owen and Dennis Carter. The gallery hosts related live events on 6 May and 4 June. New York Brooklyn High Collection, until 4 June, Tues-Mon, noon-7pm, www.brooklynhighcollection.com

CYBERSONICA UK

Technology and music event as part of a larger music and business weekend. Includes an exhibition of 'sound type' and sound installations, music video screenings and headphone mediated performances by students from Middlesex University. London various venues, 29 April & 1 May, noon-8pm, £7D/weekend, £25/day, 0670 D800100, www.cybersonica.org

LUKE POWLER UK

Video artist's work moves on to Scotland as part

of the Becks Futures exhibition. Includes The Way Out, a portrait of the life and work of musician Xantia Jones (aka L Vag, The Homosexuals, The Trip Computer Doo and Harmon E Phrasier), Glasgow CCA, 28 May 10 July, Tues-Sat, 11am-6pm, www.cca-glasgow.com

KLINKER SUPER & FILM WORKSHOP UK

To celebrate the 40th birthday of the Super 8 camera, a weekend of filming, developing and directing amateur. The weekend starts off with a public film show accompanied by the workshop band plus performances by Bicycle City Six and FO Bismen (8 May 7pm, £5/£2.50), London The Ivy House, 7 & 8 May, £45, 020 8956 9963, www.klinkerstudio.co.uk

CHRISTIAN MARCLAY UK

This retrospective of the work of the Swiss/American avant-garde continues until 15 May. The often surreal and humorous pieces include the works for video Video Quartet and Gustav Drog, and sculptural works Rape Kit, The Beatles and the Body Milk series. London Barbican Art Gallery, until 15 May, 11am-6pm daily, Tues & Thur 11am-8pm, £8/£6, www.barbican.co.uk/gallery

RADIO TAXI UK

Short range FM and internet radio event put together by Kirsten Lavers, One OneK, (IN)KX and Simon Keck operating out of the taxi. Gallery, a black cab situated on the taxi estate on the outskirts of Cambridge. Log on for nocturnal sound recordings, recordings of tea parties and newly commissioned works for radio by artists of all persuasions. Cambridge Taxo Gallery, 27-31 May, 6pm-6am & 3-6 June, 6pm-midnight, www.taxigallery.org.uk

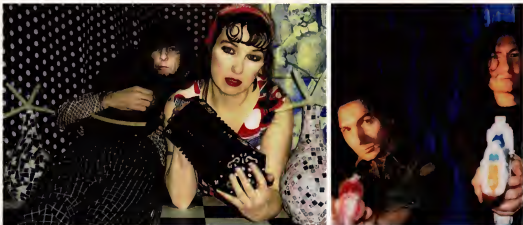
JAMES TENNEY PORTRAIT USA

A programme of works in celebration of the North American composer's 70th year. With performers including Flux Quartet, Ian Pagliasso, Elliott Sharp, Jerry Lin, Daniel Goode, Leslie

Trip Or Squeek



Out There



Touring two-on-one: Johna Wile and Pirkie MacLure (left), *My Cat Is An Alien*

Reas and Tenney himself. New York Whitney Museum of American Art, 11 May, 8pm, www.whitney.org

TRANSMISSION II: AIRBORNE

USA Exhibition and broadcast of work by artists exploring radio as a broadcast medium and as a natural phenomenon. New York New Museum at Chelsea Museum, admission until 4 June, broadcast takes place on 4 May at 8:30-8:30pm, www.flea103point9.org

TRESPASS

UK Resonance 104.4 FM has added Eliza Carthy, Hought, General Fantic and Rag Hail & Friends to the bill for its third anniversary celebrations along with The Resonance Radio Orchestra and station 6ix. London Conway Hall, 29 April, 7pm, £3 (under 18s, 30p), www.resonancefm.com

VISUAL MUSIC

USA Exhibition exploring the relationship of music and the visual arts continues until 22 May includes key paintings by Wassily Kandinsky, Paul Klee, Georgia O'Keeffe, films and videos by Harry Smith, Oskar Fischinger, Leni Lyne and John & James Whitney, and installations by Jennifer Steinkamp, Nike Savas and others. Los Angeles The Museum of Contemporary Art, until 22 May, moca.org

WILDLIFE SOUND RECORDING

UK Introduction to the special techniques and equipment used for capturing the sounds of insects, amphibians, birds, mammals and other natural sounds. London Royal Geographical Society, 6 May, 9:30am-5pm, £40, www.rgs.org/geoseminars

On stage

ANGHARAD DAVIES/RHODRI DAVIES/
MICHAEL CONEHA

Improvised the featuring visiting French saxophonist alongside local violinist and harpist.

London The Red Hedgheg, 11 May, 8pm, 020 8348 8485

ABYSSINIA INFINITE

Ethiopian soul singer Epayehu 'Gigi' Shababaw backed by a group featuring Bill Lawell, Harriet Davis and Andy Deng, Brighton Gardner Arts Centre (15), Totnes Derrington Hall (16), London Queen Elizabeth Hall (17) Gatehead The Stage (19) and Manchester RNCM (20) 2022, www.cmntrous.org.uk

LAURIE ANDERSON: THE END OF THE MOON

New solo show reflecting Anderson's time as artist-in-residence for NASA. The performance combines music and narrative in a meditative on space travel, was, consummate and spirituality Gatehead The Stage (1 May), London Barbican (18-21) and Manchester The Lyric Theatre (24), www.laurieanderson.com

ANGELS OF LIGHT + AKRON FAMILY

Michael Gira's group celebrate the release of their fourth album and are supported by their young God label mates. London ULL, 26 May, 8pm, £13.50, www.younggodrecords.com

THE BAYS + RICHARD BARBIERI + DAVID TORN

Airbushead's new jazz. London Queen Elizabeth Hall (6 May), Manchester Zan Arts Centre (7), Brighton Dome with Burnt Sugar (8), Norwich Playhouse (9), Oxford Zodiac (10) and Coventry Warwick Arts Centre (11), www.cmntrous.org.uk

BROKEN CONSORT

Rhett Gimes, Graham Ruffell and Mark Westell improve to six digital animators by Andrew Grooms. London Heath Hospital, 8 May, 4pm, 28.50, 020 7833 3644, www.theheathhospital.com

ORNIETTE COLEMAN

Fine jazz legend celebrates her 75th birthday with his quartet and special guests. London Barbican, 2 May, 7:30pm, £15-£30, 0815 120 7550, www.barbican.org.uk/contemporary

DAMON & NAOMI

US singer-songwriting duo backed by Ghost's

guitarist Michio Kurihara. Bristol Cube (19 May), London Winter Arts (20), Glasgow Cat House (21) and Newcastle Live Theatre (22), www.norandn.co.uk

ELECTRELANE + SCOUT NIBLETT

This month's cover stars play the capital supported by solo singer-songwriter accompanying herself on guitar and drums (unfortunately, not at the same time). London Scala, 10 May, 7:30pm, £10.50, 020 7833 2022, www.scala-london.co.uk

MATT ELLIOTT UK + MANYFINGERS

The man also known as Third Eye Foundation tours with live keeper Chris Cole. Aberdeen The Tunnels (27 May), Glasgow Ichigawa Sun (28), Edinburgh The Subway (29), Hull The Adelphi (30), Manchester The Unicorn (31), Oxford The Wheatheaf (1 June), Coventry The Tin Angel (2), Venn Festival Bristol (4), Brighton Harbour Belmore (5), Norwich The Marquee (6), London The Spot (7) and Colchester Arts Centre (8), www.thirdeye.foundation.com

ESSBJÖRN SVENSSON TRIO

Scandinavian contemporary jazz on tour Brighton Festival (18 May), Bristol Caledon Hall (19), London Barbican (20), Glasgow The Arches (21), Manchester Bridgewater Hall (22), Burton Open House (23), Leicester De Montfort Hall (24) and Coventry Jazz Festival (26), www.soribus.org.uk

KEIJI HAINO + JANDEK + MY CAT IS

AN ALIEN + THURPIS TULA Staggering line up of outsider tongues. Glasgow CCA, 23 May, 7pm, £7, 0141 352 4900, www.cca-glasgow.com

SHOJI HANO & GARY SMITH

Two dates for the duo of the High Rise drummer and the UK guitarist with more to be confirmed. Oxford Port Nelson (28 May) and Bristol The Crypt (29), www.youareastar.com

TREVOR JACKSON + RICHARD X +

FOUR TET

A live re-run for Gae Pargan of Sufle who was recently badly injured in a car crash. Of sets here the headlines as well as Chris Cunningham

and Super Furry Animals vs Mogwai, plus live action from Hood, Hot Chip and Helena Costas. 100 per cent of the ticket price goes to Pargan. London Scala, 9 May, 7:30pm-midnight, £10, 020 7833 2022, www.scala-london.co.uk, www.dreamteam.com

JACK JOHNSON

Live instrumentalists (lbc) add their voices to the original Miles Davis soundtrack in a showing of the 1971 documentary about the faded US boss. London Barbican, 30 May, 7:30pm, £12.50-£22.50, 020 7838 8891, www.barbican.org.uk

GARY LUCAS

Two solo acoustic dates from the Magic Band guitarist. London The Spot (4 May) and Aberdeen The Tunnels (5), www.garylucas.com

PINKIE MACLURE & JOHN WILLS

Spiritual singing and psychedelic sounds. Dublin The Boom Boom Room with Agitated Radio Hall (6 May), Liverpool New 2 Gallery with 24karaman (12), Newcastle Marden Tower (13), Leeds The Cornmarket Place (14), Aberdeen Tunnels with Monica Queen (20), London Rough Trade Shop Covent Garden (28, 29pm) and Manchester Unicorn with Matt Elliott (31), www.pinkiemaculure.co.uk

THE MAGIC BAND

Oen Van Wilt's former musicians, including Gary Lucas and John French, keep the Captain's canon alive. Glasgow The Arches (23 May), Leeds Irish Centre (24), Manchester Academy (25), Shoreditch Rock Café (26), Liverpool Beatles Rooms (28), Stoke Sugarmill (29), Nottingham Rescue Rooms (31), Cambridge Junction (1 June), Bristol Theatre & Frinlin (2), Penance The Acorn Theatre (3), Portsmouth Widdoway Rooms (5), Oxford Zodiac (6) and London Astoria (8), www.garylucas.com

JOHN MARTYIN

Unleashed single songwriters. Dublin Vic Street (9 May), Norwich Exa (11), Croydon Fairfield (13), Coventry Warwick Arts Centre (14), Bangorzone Anni (15), London Shepherd's Bush Empire (17), Cambridge Corn Exchange (18),

Salisbury City Hall (20), Bristol Colston Hall (21), Aberdeen Music Hall (23), Glasgow Royal Concert Hall (24), Newcastle City Hall (26), Salford Lowry (28), Liverpool Philharmonic Hall (29) and Leeds Hippodrome (30)

MINISTRY OF DEFIANCE

Welsh electronic instrument builder David Handford performs his audio-visual project, *Chapel Costume*. Cardiff Chapter Arts, 8 May, 02920 511050, www.pozzofloridacore.com

MY CAT IS AN ALIEN

Italian space rock duo on tour. Grotcheshead The Sage (21 May), Glasgow CD with Jandek, Ravi Hano and Tanya Tain (23), Manchester venue the (24), Birmingham venue the (25), Bristol The Cube (26) and London Barden's Bowdler (27). www.gwp-plms.blaydoncenter.co.uk

THE NECKS + ZAUM

Two contrasting takes on 21st century avant jazz. London The Spot, 19 May, 230, www.thenecks.co.uk

SHAMAN VOICES

Three ensembles from different traditions: Okean Tashan Zan Quartet from Mongolia, Whime Ito from Finland, and Tanya Tagaq Gills from Canada. Brecknell South Hill Park (3 May), Nottingham Lakeside (4), Bristol St George's (5), Southampton Turner Sims Concert Hall (6), London Losi St Lure's (7), Brixley The Shed (8) and Exeter Phoenix (9). www.cmtours.org.uk

DAMO SUZUKI & ZUKANICAN

UK-cinematic performs with UK space rock collective. St Helens The Naval Club with Super Numer (26 May), Liverpool Carling Academy (27) and London The Spot (29). www.damosuzuki.com

TACET ENSEMBLE + COPPER

FAMILY + SHIRLEY COLLINS
Contemporary music ensemble collaborates with legends of the English folk scene. Hove Old Market Centre (18 May), Croydon Arts Centre (16 June) and Crawley Hawth Theatre Studio (26)

JOHN THICHAU + EVAN PARKER + SPRING HEEL JACK
Afro-danish saxophonist makes a rare UK

appearance at Spring Heel Jack's monthly club, Back in Your Town. London Red Rose Club, 19 May, 8:30pm-11pm, £5/£3, 020 7263 7265

TRIDRISSE + KONONO NO I

Chicago post-rock instrumentalists supported by electric Congolese thumb-piano troupe. London Royal Festival Hall, 24 May, 7:30pm, £17.50-£20, 08703 800 400, www.rfh.org.uk

VAN DER GRAAF GENERATOR

Reunion date for the 70s Prog rockers featuring Peter Hamill. London Royal Festival Hall (6 May). www.vandergraafgenerator.co.uk

Club spaces

ALECTO ECOUSTIC

Improved and composed music for laptop, cello and concert from Unplayboy and guests. Manchester Oklahoma CofE, 15 May, 7:30pm, £4/£2, 0161 834 1136

BAD TIMING

Live music/rock/pop action from The Chop plus support. Cambridge The Portland, 11 May, 8:30pm, £5/£4, 01223 357268, www.bad-timing.co.uk

FREE RADICALS

Improved monthly featuring the duo of Pete McPail & Pat Thomas and the Heavenlyceptor too featuring Stephen Grey. London Red Rose Club, 4 May, 8pm, £5/£3, 07778 363492

KLINKER DALSTON

Improved music and off the wall performance club featuring Heavenceptor and Antonio Guillen/Chela Alonso/Javier Carmona (3 May); Aardvark and Melek Taus II (6); SNR Pete McPail/Osmic Lush/Roger Teller and Non Alcoholic Vodka (10); Echo City (13); Matt Scott & Hugh Metcalfe with films and friends (17); Mele (20); the (24); WombClub and Ben Drew & Angered Queens (27). London The Suzzar, Tuesdays and Fridays, 8pm, £5/£2.50, 020 8806 6216, www.klinkerclub.info

KLINKER NUHHEAD

South of the Thames party for the improvised performance club. Karl Suther (3); Rob Danthon

& John Jaseoch (12 May); Chyskyria from Sibena, John Callaghan and David Van Cauter (19); the (26); and Friday Sunday with Bent Shaft Orchestra, FO Boman, plus free homemade soap, films and much more (29, 2-10pm, £8/£4). London The Ivy House, Thursdays, 8pm, £5/£2.50, 020 7732 0222, www.klinkerclub.info

LIQUIDISERS' BEST TESTING

Verse and language evening featuring Paul Wilson's sound poetry bingo, a sound poetry choir and Ol Chive Graham. Northampton Old Black Lion, 18 May, 8pm, £3, www.theliquidisers.co.uk

OXFORD IMPROVISERS

Workshop led by Steve Broadford. Oxford Brooks University, 7 May, 2pm, £10/£7, www.oxfordimprovisers.com

MINING FOR GOLD

With Vic Goddard of Subway Set. From Brooklyn, Broadbelt, Charlotte Gving and Yellow Sea. London 12 St, 27 May, www.miningforgold.net

RAY'S JAZZ AT FOYLES

Free monthly improvised music concerts in a record shop cum cafe continue with the duo of double bassist John Edwards and soprano sax hero Lal Cordill. Ray's Jazz at Foyles, 26 May, 6pm, 020 7440 3205, www.foyles.co.uk

SPRAWL

Self-styled sonic buffet of electronics and related digital masses. This month 'Gonny'ark from Vancouver, Dave Miller and Function from Australia, and Ol' mario, no from Paris. London Chamberhouse Bar, 11 May, 7:30-11:30pm, £4/£3, 020 7608 0858, www.sprawl.org.uk

Incoming

BAD BONN KILBI

SWITZERLAND
Alpine alt-rock event featuring Sales, Christian Fennenz, Zu & Osmo Suzuki, Cat Power, Wolf Eyes, Fe-Mail, Felix Kubin and others. Oldinger, 9-11 June, 00 41 26 493 1115, www.badbonn.ch

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OST

Saturdays 4:30pm, Soundtracks with Johnny Turk

OUT TO LUNCH

Wednesdays 2pm, With Ben Watson

OVER THE EDGE

Sundays 9am, With Negativland

ROUGH TRADE SHOP

Thursdays noon, With Simon Russell

SCRATCHING THE SURFACE

Alternate Tuesdays 8:30pm, With Mike Barnes

SOLID STEEL

Mondays 1am, With Coldcut

SOUND POETS EXPOSED

Fridays 11:30pm, With Clive Graham

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SPARK

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SUDDI PER IL POPOLO

CANADA

Wide-ranging, month-long avant sound festival supported by The Wire and this year featuring Peter Brinkmann, Harrod Dwyer, Bill Dixon, Ecclesians, Sunburned Hand Of The Man, Berntsen/Bagdas, Simon Finn, Anna Banks, A Silver Mt Zion, Wadada Leo Smith, Hen Benmink and many more. Montreal La Sala Rossa & Casa Del Popolo, 1-26 June, www.suoniperilpopolo.org

VENN

UK

Three day festival in Bristol featuring Mark Stewart & Adrian Sherwood, Acid Mothers Temple, Warsaw Village Band, OJ Rapture, Eberkling, Ecclesians, Morsia Nader, Phil Minton, Peter Bastien, A Hawk And A Hacksaw, Matt Elliott, z'ev, Vektor featuring Giovanni Boshart and more. Bristol various venues, 3-5 June, www.vennfestival.co.uk

Out There items for inclusion in the June Issue must reach us by Friday 29 April

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Alternate Saturdays 8pm. With Richard Thomas

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NOSTALGIE JA MBOKA

Saturdays 1-3pm

CROSS RADIO

Sundays 11:30pm. John Dancos's radio art show

DIGGERS

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FIFTY-FIFTY SOUND SYSTEM

Tuesdays 11:30pm. Old Skool dub & reggae

KOSMISCHE

Tuesdays 10:00. Cosmic music

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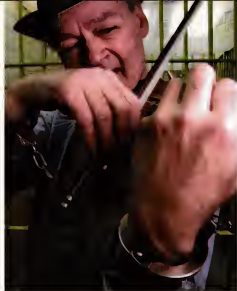
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Epiphanies

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he's experienced during a 40 year career



If I were going to be pedantic about it, an epiphany is the manifestation (appearance) of a supernatural being, and 'epiphanies' don't really happen in sound. In fact, I myself have never seen a supernatural being show itself; but if I had, it truly would have been a supremely surprising, awe-inspiring and life-changing event. And as for surprising, awe-inspiring and life-changing events, yes, I've had a number of them, and some of the most uplifting and startling, appearing in the form of sounds, were musical epiphanies.

Here's a sound epiphany: about 1972 I had had a bad psychedelic trip, and for several years afterwards I felt decented, as though I had somehow lost my inner path to the full joy of Being. Then one unbearably stressful day late in the 1970s I got on a bus in Springfield, Ohio; I was leaving my job and my family, moving away to a new city; a blanket of anxiety crushed me in my seat into a hypnagogic near-sleep state. Suddenly there came a thundering CRACK! and I woke, knowing that the loud sound had happened inside my head. OK, I quietly spoke to myself, that's it, that bad trip is finally gone; and it was. Still is. When I told this to my friend Hollis Frampton, he told me he had also once heard that sound, when he was racing to a hospital where his partner lay broken after an accident, and he became helplessly snarled in a traffic jam. CRACK!

That uncanny experience did verge on the supernatural, but it was also very uncommon; on the other hand, everybody seems to have intense "musical epiphanies": Epiphanies, then, must be a foundation element of human musical experience; epiphanies are a glue that connects people to musical pleasure (bliss, fun, profundity). Everyone who knows me well knows that I believe musical harmony arises from our ability to understand the vowel sounds of speech. Now there is another tie that binds music to our bodies: epiphany.

Music is sexual above all else; music is the human mating call. The sexual epiphany strikes everywhere, all the time; it still strikes me with virtual abandon. The trilling of the dominant male attracts young females who are ready to mate; the soaring call of the female launches the love lust in the young male. The

preening of playing, the moaning of song, the longing of desire, the urge to rhythmic movement – all of these are parallel in music and sex. Can that explain my blooming adolescence, when my father's meagre collection of Romantic 78 rpm classical records suddenly began sending me spinning into ecstasy on wave after wave of epiphanies? Brahms, Tchaikovsky – rapture. I was captured; in love; there was no other real music. 'Modern' music? Pop music? – Just careenist noise! Was this out of control? No; this was epiphany under control.

Musical epiphanies seem to have two surfaces that slide against each other to release a cascade of psychic energy. One surface is pure interior light, a dazzle, a flash, an overwhelming rush of solid 'pure'. The other surface is social, engaged with the cultural world, more profound; the difference between an epiphany and a simple drug rush is that an epiphany reveals some kind of cultural truth. The condition of epiphany is a moment of stark contrast, a slippage of the two surfaces; somehow a lie is refracted and shattered, and a truth is there. An epiphany gives you something to take away forever.

The most conceptual epiphany I ever experienced came when I heard a beautiful sound repeating itself (the way tunes do) in my head; but this was an alien sound, a weird and wonderful sound from the other side. I was 17. It left me with a burning question: where had I picked up this lambent fragment of sound? To my amusement, it showed up a day later when I dutifully played the 'modern music' record my pal Henry Flynt had convinced me was "important", but which I hated: Bartók's *String Quartet No. 4*. I still know exactly which notes it was – the parallel fifths in the cello at bar 105 of the finale. The epiphany was double: when I understood that the detested noise had become musical epiphany, I realised with a transfiguring flash of understanding that I can learn to control my musical liking, completely. Within a few months I could like almost any music they could throw at me. At first it took an intensely focused energy expenditure to reach epiphany without the crutch of familiarity (I know this song, but it was possible; it worked). I saw Cage and Tudor for the first time. Oh,

wow, I thought, he is making this knowledge the message of his work.

Those six unlikely cello notes changed my life; another unlikely tune that changed my life was Eddy Duchin's "Carinhoso" (composed by the Brazilian musician Pianguinha). This time the 'rush' side of the epiphany was chemically launched; in 1962 Jack Smith and I and a lot of other LES sooms were getting jacked up on bathtub butacaine. The Duchin recording was a 78 rpm disc that I taped and 'stretched' for him, to fit his short film, *Scotch Tape*. I went along to the theatre and when the film started I played the tape recording I'd made – and had an epiphany. It was the opposite of that last one; now I could not believe how completely swept away I was by the combination of film and music! And by lowbrow Easy Listening crap, at that! "Carinhoso" with Scotch Tape was like a long orgasm; from that moment of seduction I was metamorphosed, and had only to dry my wings slowly afterwards as a film maker.

Here's a music notation epiphany. The score that more than any other opened up my way to performing as I do on the violin was HIF Biber's *Mystery Sonatas* (1676). Since I was in Munich one day in 1972, I went to the library and requested the score. A few minutes later the librarian brought it to my table – the sole original copy, in Biber's handwriting. I sat and looked, but I had to wait until my eyes cleared of tears to be able to see well enough to turn through the pages.

And then there is the epiphany that can happen when almost limitless power is being pipelined directly through your own hands into your brain; this is the one that pulls together all the threads and becomes irresistibly addictive. The energy field encircles the violin, the fingers, the body, the brain, in a rigorous synchronicity of complete control, spelled out in the pulsing interactions and acoustical microstructures of the notes. For me, this epiphany regularly comes with the slow rush of a big wave, a harmonic tsunami, whose emblem is the names of the intervals I feel myself etch into the violin, and whose final registration of prodigious power only takes place when those obscene vowels strike the ear. □

The Wire T-shirts 2005



**Philip Machalski:
Adventures In Modern Music
(Original Mix)**

This design was commissioned by Chicago's Empty Bottle club as a visual motif for the first Adventures In Modern Music festival, which took place at the Empty Bottle over two days in September 2003 and was co-hosted by The Wire. The design is printed in black and white on an olive green T-shirt, with *The Wire* url printed in black on the right sleeve. Limited edition of 100 shirts.



The standard T-shirt
A black T-shirt with *The Wire* logo printed in blue across the front. Unlimited edition

The Wire T-shirt comes in two styles: a standard black shirt printed with *The Wire* logo; plus a series of limited edition shirts featuring specially commissioned designs by a variety of underground artists, musicians and organisations.

These special edition T-shirts are printed in limited runs of 100 shirts each. Once these have been sold, that's it, they won't be reprinted. For details of prices, sizes and how to order, turn to page 101

THE SEXUAL LIFE OF THE SAVAGES

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TRAVIS BIGGS

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SOUL JAZZ RECORDS

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